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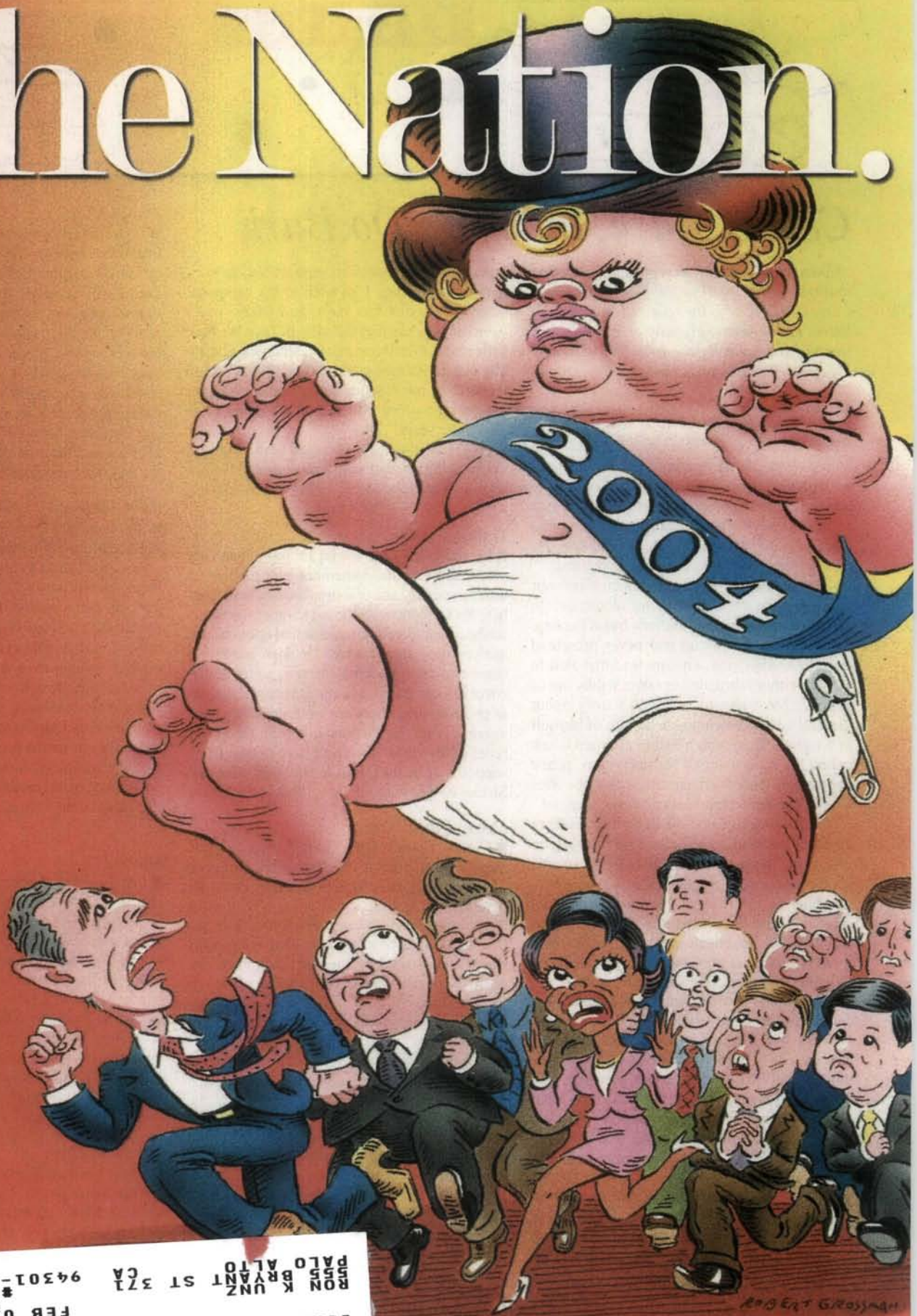

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Clark, Clark, the Dogs Do Bark

"Hatchet job" was the term most often used by readers to describe Matt Taibbi's "Clark's True Colors" [Dec. 15]. We received hundreds of letters (some seemingly part of an organized campaign) denouncing the article. A few found it "witty" or "simply hilarious." —The Editors

Manchester, NH

■ We were stunned to read Matt Taibbi's "Clark's True Colors." This article has nothing to do with Wes Clark's candidacy or, for that matter, with investigative reporting. Taibbi alleges to have infiltrated a volunteer meeting disguised as an injured adult-film director just to get a rise out of a group of hard-working volunteers. He clearly lacks professional ethics—and talent.

Throughout the article, Taibbi confuses our names, our words and even our identities. He refers to us as campaign staffers, but at the time we were volunteers and had never presented ourselves otherwise. The quotes attributed to us were either fabricated or taken wildly out of context. Most absurd is Taibbi's story about General Clark showing us a picture of himself in a tight T-shirt, which Taibbi claimed Clark called his "drool shot." Military hero, peace negotiator, leader—those titles describe Wes Clark. Wannabe teen idol certainly does not.

Taibbi's motive is most likely his vendetta against General Clark for leading the Kosovo campaign. In spring 1999, Taibbi wrote an article for his now-defunct tabloid in Russia, *eXile*, in which he subtly denied the infamous massacre of Kosovar Albanians at Racak. Human Rights Watch investigated and verified the massacre, which is a prominent allegation in the indictment against Slobodan Milosevic.

Taibbi also wrote an analysis of the Kosovo campaign, cunningly titled "101 Reasons Why NATO's War Sucks," for *eXile* in April 1999. Reason 72: "The Serbs are one of the tallest, most beautiful European tribes. Somalis, too, are tall and elegant, as are the Tutsi, who actually call themselves 'The Tall People.' Why are the most beautiful tribes being wiped out by the squat and ugly?" Taibbi's attempt at humor falls very flat.

A hatchet job like this is not worthy of *The Nation*. It should have been shopped around to the tabloids, or better, chucked into the trash where it belongs. DAVID RUBIN, DAVID YOKEN

Escondido, Calif.

■ What has happened to my *Nation*? Who is this Matt Taibbi? A mole sent by Karl Rove? Seems like the nasty, dirty-tricks game he likes to play. Taibbi shows such contempt for the general and dismisses those who support him as silly, naïve Bush-haters. I've been in his campaign since the Draft Clark days, and I have never heard anyone say they hate Bush. True, we have little respect for the man's leadership and actually fear his Administration. Clark offers proven leadership, intelligence and a chance to repair the damage we've inflicted on the world these past three years.

If *The Nation* is for Dean, so be it—but let it not be at the price of such a meanspirited attack on one of his rivals. ROSEMARY CREIGH

Lexington, Mass.

■ I've been a *Nation* reader for more than fifty years, and I cannot remember ever reading an article as sleazy and unjournalistic as Matt Taibbi's. Isn't a reporter supposed to report facts, describe a candidate's statements and opinions and analyze their significance? Or does journalism consist of taking a false identity, going undercover in a campaign, assuming asinine disguises to provoke silly responses from underlings and starring (with his girlfriend, yet) as the comic relief of his story? You don't have to be a Clark supporter (I'm for Dean) to find this offensive. Shame on *The Nation*! BERNARD MAZEL

Mercer Island, Wash.

■ I read "Clark's True Colors" with an open mind, figuring that if *The Nation* had criticism of General Clark, it was of interest. But after reading it, I had the same opinion of Wesley Clark but a much lowered opinion of *The Nation*. I'm disgusted to see you using the gossipy smear tactics used by the radical right to discredit Anita Hill in the confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas. Since you've demonstrated that your journalistic standards are down there with Fox "news," which I boycott, I'll boycott *The Nation* as well. MYRA BRONSTEIN

Basel, Switzerland

■ We were very disappointed in your article about Wes Clark. We think he is in the best position to win against Bush—his command of the international scene is far, far superior; he has great credibility here in Europe and the world; and America needs to build a better reputation. His personal style may be a bit formal, but I'd trade it any day for the "down home" illiteracy of Bush. From what we've seen of the other candidates, there is no one else who could beat Bush. First and foremost we need to get out of this international disaster and get back our world reputation. You have done Clark and your country a great disservice. JANE CHRIST-SMITH

New York City

■ I find the reporting and columns in your fine magazine first-rate. I'm giving gift subscriptions to friends and family this holiday season. However, I will terminate my subscription and recommend that to everyone I know if you run more articles like the one on General Clark—one of the most idiotic pieces of shoddy journalism I have ever come across. I cannot begin to understand why a journalist would attempt a puerile prank like posing as an injured pornographer and then try to extrapolate something meaningful from it. These are the actions of a brainless frat boy, *not* a journalist. DAVID GOLDSTEIN

North Hollywood, Calif.

■ Your hatchet job on Wes Clark is beyond vile. It is black-ops propaganda. The personal animus your writer brings to his "analysis" is palpable. He is clearly wrong. I have spoken with the general. He is one of the warmest, most real, intelligent and inspiring people I have had the honor to meet. That is a feeling shared by virtually everyone who has had a moment with him or heard him speak live. That *The Nation* would endorse this scabrous attack says more about you than him. Clark's candidacy will be a renaissance for our nation (not *The Nation*) and for a world waiting for America to retake its vital position of moral leadership. I support the next President of the United States, Wesley Clark. MICHAEL MELVOIN

Minneapolis

■ I am, frankly, shocked at this yellow journalism in *The Nation*. Matt Taibbi's article is a biased piece of fiction, from his baiting of campaign workers to his inflammatory language. Funny how he is an apologist for war criminals like Milosevic, a man brought to justice by Wes Clark. Amazing that he worms his way into the campaign and then trashes it for his own reasons, none of which have to do with informing your readers. I have long supported *The Nation*, but I will look elsewhere for my news now—if I wanted "fair and balanced," I would have turned on Fox News. PATRICIA MATTOS

Osterville, Mass.

■ I have been a reader/subscriber to *The Nation* for the better part of forty years and must say that the Matt Taibbi article is the least compelling, most poorly written piece I have ever read in a publication noted for its persuasive and literate writing. To paraphrase Lloyd Bentsen when he put the callow Dan Quayle in his place, "I have read and enjoyed Hunter Thompson for years, and, Matt Taibbi, you are no Hunter Thompson."

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EDITORIALS

Dissing Dean

Petulance is seldom considered a prime presidential attribute. George W. Bush's smirk notwithstanding, Americans prefer adults as Presidents. That makes the poisonous attacks unleashed on Howard Dean by other contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination doubly noxious. These desperate Democrats are writing the script for Bush's future TV ads in unfounded assaults on Dean while providing ample evidence to Democratic voters that they are unfit to lead.

The current round of vitriol was sparked by Dean's statement that the capture of Saddam Hussein makes America no safer. The only thing notable about that statement is its common sense. A top US commander in Iraq had just declared that Saddam's capture would make no difference one way or another. All sensate observers agree that the war on Iraq has been a distraction from combating terrorism—draining intelligence, resources and political attention. To reinforce the point, the Department of Homeland Security, concerned about chatter implying a new terror assault, has just placed America on high alert for the holidays. Joe Lieberman, John Kerry and Dick Gephardt are scoring Dean for stating the obvious.

Lieberman has issued the most personal assaults. Like the Democratic Leadership Council that he once chaired, Lieberman seems energized only when he is assailing other Democrats. No doubt Lieberman, leading in the polls at the beginning of the campaign, is bitter at his fall. It isn't surprising that Democrats, including Al Gore, have abandoned Lieberman, the champion of pre-emptive war, trade deficits, stock options and Medicare privatization. Dean has soared precisely by daring to challenge Bush (and thus Lieberman) on the central choices facing America. Surely Lieberman might have chosen a more graceful exit than hurling false charges at his most successful opponent.

Sadly, John Kerry too has become shriller as his stock has declined. Dean displaced Kerry as the liberal standard-bearer by speaking clearly against the war on Iraq. Kerry argued cogently against that war until he voted to give Bush a blank check to wage it. He then spent months struggling to explain his incoherence to voters and seemed depleted from the effort. It is preposterous for Kerry now to indict Dean for being all over the place on Iraq. His jeremiads might better be issued to his mirror.

These politicians are acting like children throwing their marbles at the one who beat them. In this, they display their bitterness not simply at Dean but at the growing legions of Democratic voters who support him. In Washington, the pros worry that these attacks can only help Bush if Dean gains the nomination. But the energy unleashed by the remarkable Dean campaign will continue to grow.

And no matter who gets the nomination, the real question of the election will be whether voters want to fire George Bush or not. Remember, the last insurgent Democrat to win, Bill Clinton, was introduced to most Americans as a man who cheated on his wife, claimed he didn't inhale, ducked the draft and wore boxers, not briefs. Clinton won because voters wanted to get rid of George the First. And like Clinton but unlike his petulant opponents, Dean will at least remind voters clearly of why getting rid of George the Second is equally necessary.

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Neoconning Us Again?

Libya's agreement to give up its weapons of mass destruction and open itself up to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency is a welcome development. But it is not a product of the Bush doctrine, as the White House and its neoconservative supporters would have us believe. Indeed, it seems apparent that this agreement could have occurred much earlier had the Bush Administration not been so preoccupied with preparing for war on Iraq. As Flynt Leverett, a former member of the Bush Administration's National Security Council staff, argues, "Within months after September 11, we had the Libyans, the Syrians and the Iranians all coming to us saying, What can we do [to better relations]? We didn't really engage any of them because we decided to do Iraq. We really squandered two years of capital that will make it harder to apply this model to the hard cases like Iran and Syria."

In fact, the rehabilitation of Libya and, for that matter, Syria and Iran, is the culmination of a ten-year process of international diplomacy involving engagement and sanctions. The brunt of that diplomatic effort was earlier borne by our European allies, who worried that the US effort to intimidate and isolate Libya would be counterproductive. After all, the earlier American use of force against Muammar el-Qaddafi in 1986 for Libya's alleged role in the Berlin disco bombing had only led to Libya's retaliation with the downing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. Thus, throughout the past decade our European partners openly defied the Clinton and Bush administrations' efforts to isolate Libya and worked hard to bring about a United Nations–negotiated settlement of the Lockerbie case.

It is, of course, difficult to divine Qaddafi's exact reasons for opening up his country to inspections at this time. But he has long made clear his desire to renounce support for terrorism and to re-enter the international mainstream. It's no secret that Libya's oil and gas industry needs more international investment and that Qaddafi wants to further expand his business and trading relations not just with Europe but with the United States.

In any case, Libya was not an immediate target of the Bush Administration, and it was not possible that Washington would have attacked Libya against the express wishes of its three closest European allies—Britain, Italy and Spain—all of which had carried on diplomatic and trade relations with Tripoli against Washington's wishes. Qaddafi undoubtedly knew all this, and worked hard to open Libya up to British and other European efforts to arrange discussions with Washington.

Thus, the Libyan case seems to be more a vindication of multilateral diplomacy and the United Nations than of the Bush doctrine. In retrospect, it is clear that the UN inspections regime succeeded in disarming Iraq and that European engagement prepared the way for Iranian and now Libyan acceptance of international inspections. Yes, there is a new paradigm emerging for reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction, but it has little to do with the Bush doctrine. Even the Bush Administration seems to have begun to recognize the virtues of diplomacy and international engagement, even as it still tries to neocon us into believing that it is all due to its misguided war on Iraq.

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COMMENT

The War on Our Rights

TAKING LIBERTIES

"Even in times of national emergency—indeed, particularly in such times—it is the obligation of the Judicial Branch to ensure the preservation of our constitutional values and to prevent the Executive Branch from running roughshod over the rights of citizens and aliens alike." So wrote the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit on December 18, ruling that foreign nationals held as "enemy combatants" at Guantánamo Bay Naval Base have a right to seek court review of the legality of their detention. The same day, a Court of Appeals on the other coast ruled that the President acting alone lacks authority to detain US citizens as "enemy combatants."

Never before has the Administration suffered such setbacks to its domestic war on terrorism. And the backlash has been growing. On December 3 a Court of Appeals ruled unconstitutional significant portions of the federal statute criminalizing "material support" to designated "terrorist organizations." The statute has been the linchpin of most of the Justice Department's terrorism prosecutions precisely because it does not require proof of individual involvement in, or support of, actual terrorism—only proof of some "support" to a proscribed group. The court held that the prohibitions on providing "personnel" and "training" to such groups impermissibly penalized constitutionally protected activity.

On December 9 the military embarrassingly admitted that it did not even know whether supposedly secret information seized from Capt. James Yee, the former Muslim chaplain at Guantánamo, was classified. Yee had been arrested and detained for more than two months, with much fanfare about national security breaches at Guantánamo, for allegedly taking his own notes off the base in a notebook. Meanwhile, in one of the most vindictive prosecutions in years, the military is prosecuting Yee for committing adultery and having pornographic images on his computer, hardly matters of national security.

For all John Ashcroft's blustering, only one 9/11 terrorism case has actually gone to trial—and the outcome of that trial has now been called into serious question. The case, tried in Detroit, resulted in a mixed verdict this past June. Two defendants were convicted of conspiracy to support some unspecified terrorist act in the unspecified future, and two others were acquitted on the terrorism charges. On December 16 the federal district judge in the case formally admonished Ashcroft for interfering with the trial by violating a gag order and officially praising the government's principal witness while the jury was deliberating. And on December 12 the judge held a hearing on whether to vacate the convictions altogether on the ground that federal prosecutors had failed to disclose evidence that the same witness had lied on the stand.

These developments suggest why the Administration has sought to avoid any meaningful review of its detention of enemy combatants. Due process, checks and balances, and judicial review all have the potential to reveal error and abuse. And when the government launches a "preventive" law-enforcement strategy based on predictions about future behavior rather than actual evidence of illegal conduct, error and abuse are bound to follow.

As the Ninth Circuit said, courts have an "obligation" to "prevent the Executive Branch from running roughshod over the rights of citizens and aliens alike." Precisely to avoid the confining effects of that "obligation," the Administration has insisted that the more than 650 people held at Guantánamo have no right to any judicial review or even to a hearing before military officers. It has similarly argued that US citizens designated by the President as "enemy combatants" can be held indefinitely, incommunicado, without access to courts or lawyers. In essence, it has argued that when it comes to detentions in the war on terrorism, the President is above the law.

Now two courts have squarely rejected that view. The Ninth Circuit held that the Guantánamo detainees have a right to go to court to make sure the President is acting within the law. And the Second Circuit held that absent authorization from Congress, US citizens captured on US soil may not be detained as "enemy combatants" at all. In both cases, the courts have insisted that in a constitutional democracy, the rule of law has an essential role.

The Guantánamo issue is already before the Supreme Court in another case, which will be decided by June. The Court is also virtually certain to take up the question of whether US citizens may be held as "enemy combatants." Will the Supreme Court live up to the "obligation" identified by the Ninth Circuit? It was willing to step in to protect the rights of George W. Bush as he sought to block a recount in order to be selected President with fewer votes than his opponent. But how will it respond to the Administration's argument that Bush ought to enjoy not only the powers of a President in a system of checks and balances but the prerogative of a king, unfettered by the limits of law? DAVID COLE

David Cole, The Nation*'s legal affairs correspondent, is the author of* Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism *(New Press).*

Despair Is Not an Option

Many people believed at the time that the trauma of 9/11 would change the world. My feeling was that our American response would be far more crucial. The President, after all, did not have to declare war. He could have called the terrorists mass murderers, their deeds crimes against humanity. He could have said to the American people and the world, "We will respond, but not in kind. We will not seek to avenge the death of innocent Americans by the death of innocent victims elsewhere, lest we become what we abhor. We refuse to ratchet up the cycle of violence that brings only ever more death, destruction and deprivation. What we *will* do is build coalitions with other nations. We will share intelligence, freeze assets and engage in forceful extraditions of terrorists if internationally sanctioned. I promise to do all in my power to see justice done, but by the force of law only, never by the law of force."

It was a ripe moment—to educate the soul of the nation, to improve the quality of our suffering. We had lost our sense of in-

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COMMENT

vulnerability and superpower invincibility, but as these were only illusions, we should not have grieved their passing. Other nations too had been unfairly hurt, many of them, and far worse than we. But instead of deepening our kinship with the world's suffering, the President chose to invoke an almost unlimited sense of entitlement to pursue in our own way what he termed a struggle "to rid the world of evil."

As a result we squandered the widely felt sympathy that was ours on 9/11, symbolized by the headline in *Le Monde* the following day: *Nous sommes tous Américains*. We also squandered the near-record budget surplus that could have helped victims abroad as well as the homeless and hungry in the United States, where poverty is a tragedy that great wealth makes a sin. Finally, ironically and predictably, the Bush doctrine of unilateralism and preventive war has recruited more terrorists than it has cowed. Clearly the past two years have been morally and politically disastrous.

But *tempus fugit*—an election year is upon us, another ripe moment for educating and for changing regimes in Washington. While turned off by the President's chirping optimism, I still find encouraging such developments as the following:

Although still claiming moral clarity, the President is clearly losing moral authority. The stubborn persistence of evil in Iraq, Afghanistan and here at home is helping Americans to slough off the self-righteousness that threatens our capacity for self-criticism.

Reservoirs of anger and common sense have already been tapped by the presidential campaigns, especially those of Dennis Kucinich and Howard Dean.

The mammoth mistakes of globalization, highlighted by developing countries like Brazil, are being acknowledged by First World nations and important world organizations.

At home the bloat of the military, the plight of the poor and the sorrow of the aged and infirm are mounting concerns of big-city mayors and state governors, who stare helplessly at their deficit-plagued coffers.

CALVIN TRILLIN

Reaction in the Justice Department to Federal Appeals Court Ruling 'War on Terrorism' Detention Policies Unconstitutional

A right to counsel and a right to trial?
John Ashcroft wonders: How do you suppose
We'll save our freedoms and our way of life
If we start granting everybody those?

When the chief legal officer of the land fears freedom, more and more Americans are fearing for the freedom of the nation. Federal courts too are reacting to preserve constitutional rights.

Like politicians, clergy can be so cautious as to become moral failures. Now, however, they are signing on by the hundreds to the Clergy Leadership Network, recently formed to counter the influence of the Christian right. They are eager to resurrect two great biblical mandates—to pursue justice and to seek peace. They are appalled by tax breaks that fill the rich with good things and send the poor empty away; most are for the global abolition of nuclear weapons; and most, I would imagine, view marriage as a human right, not a reward for being heterosexual.

Finally, I think of the Women in Black in Israel, the Liberian women praying alongside the road, the whistleblowers everywhere who are trying to dim fears and raise hopes. So much is at stake in the new year that despair is not an option. Better by far to heed the poet and double the heart's might. WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN

William Sloane Coffin, pastor emeritus of the Riverside Church in Manhattan, is the author, most recently, of Credo *(Westminster).*

Fleeing the Greens

ELECTION MATTERS

Ralph Nader has finally figured out how to unite Democrats and Greens. After Nader notified Green officials that he would not seek the party's presidential nomination in 2004 and let it be known that he might stand as an independent, it can safely be said that a number of Green activists were every bit as upset with Nader as those Democrats who believe the votes he won in key states cost Al Gore the presidency in 2000.

In a sense, however, both the Democrats and the Greens are wrong to worry. A Nader candidacy in 2004, either as a Green or as an unaffiliated independent, was never likely to win as many votes as the 2.9 million the consumer activist secured in 2000. The determination to prevent George W. Bush from securing a second term is so strong on the left that it has caused a great many voters who backed Nader, and even some who consider themselves Greens, to grudgingly accept that they will be voting for a Democrat in 2004. If you scratch a Dennis Kucinich backer, you will usually find a Nader enthusiast. And if you attend a Howard Dean meet-up, you'll see plenty of students with Green Party pins still attached to their knapsacks. I've talked to a lot of them; they haven't necessarily given up on third-party politics, and many of them still revere Nader, but they are passionate about beating Bush this time around.

The best bet is that the field of likely voters for the Greens or an independent Nader candidacy has shrunk significantly. Unless the Democrats destroy themselves, either with a fratricidal fight for the nomination or by selecting a pro-war, pro–free trade candidate like Joe Lieberman, 2004 is not shaping up as a particularly good year for breaking the grip of the two major parties. Polls and anecdotal evidence tell the same story: With his preemptive wars abroad and pre-emption of civil liberties and civil society at home, Bush has made the choice so stark that voters

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are unlikely to feel very adventurous come November.

But that does not mean that Nader's move outside the Green fold is insignificant. If Nader runs as an independent and splinters the already small number of potential voters for a progressive alternative to the Democrats and Republicans, he runs the risk of doing serious damage to both the Greens and himself. Does anyone seriously think that Democratic, Republican and media insiders who kept Nader out of the 2000 presidential debates will accept him in 2004, or that they would possibly let Nader and a Green who is little known nationally—such as Texas lawyer David Cobb or 2003 California gubernatorial candidate Peter Camejo—take podiums opposite Bush and the Democratic nominee? It will not happen. And when the votes are counted, if both Nader and the Green candidate fall below 1 percent and lose a load of ballot lines, the political obituary writers will be sharpening their pens.

It's no secret that Nader was never entirely comfortable in the Green camp. He refused to join the party even when he was its nominee, and as early as 2001 he was talking about whether he might have been a more effective contender in 2000 if he had run as an independent. Even as some Greens complained that Nader was not enough of a team player, Nader grumbled about what he saw as the Greens' failure to develop a coherent strategy and a strong enough organization to compete seriously on the national level. Though Nader was the likely Green nominee in 2004, he was none too pleased with what he felt was the party's greater emphasis on the process of nominating a candidate than putting a campaign in place. That said, the Greens retain enough ballot lines and enough of a grassroots organization to mount a nationwide presidential campaign. With less than a year to go before the next election, it's difficult to imagine how an independent Nader candidacy could create a parallel infrastructure that is any more effective than what the Greens have in place.

So why go independent? Critics (and even former supporters) say this is just the latest evidence that Nader is on an extended ego trip. But that's a simplistic calculation. Nader has an ego, but his presidential ambitions have always been guided by a firm, and hardly irrational, belief that both major parties are corrupted—the Republicans beyond repair and the Democrats not much better. Nader wants to upset the country's politics just as he upset the corporate world with his unsafe-at-any-speed activism of the 1960s. There's little point in questioning his sincerity. There is, however, good reason to question his strategy.

Faced with the likelihood that further fragmentation of the non-Democratic left will weaken not just the Greens but very possibly the long-term prospects for third-party and independent politics, this would seem to be a very good moment for everyone to step back and think about whether this is the time for old allies to fight among themselves. In that moment of reflection, both sides might even ask whether it makes sense to mount a presidential campaign—or worse yet, two presidential campaigns—in 2004. Indeed, after Green Matt Gonzalez's near-win in the December 9 San Francisco mayoral race, Nader and the Greens ought at least to consider making 2004 a year for building capacity at the local level, rather than reducing capacity nationally.

JOHN NICHOLS

Supermarket Showdown

A joyless holiday season faces 70,000 unionized Southern and Central California supermarket workers who have been on strike or locked out since October 11. The strikers, with their lively picket lines and remarkable unity, have become a national symbol of labor's fight back against corporate grabs. But now things are taking a perilous turn.

Thousands of supporters and hundreds of national labor leaders, including AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, staged a solidarity march through Los Angeles during the week before Christmas. But as union support funds start to dry up, notices have gone out from the United Food and Commercial Workers warning striking members that they will soon have to pay their own costly health insurance premiums. Worse, a move in November by 8,000 Teamsters truckdrivers and warehouse workers—who struck against supermarket warehouses in an attempt to force the employers to settle—has failed. With the three corporate grocery giants—Safeway, Albertsons and Kroger—refusing to buckle, the Teamsters say they have no choice but to send their drivers back to work.

Under this mounting pressure, the UFCW went into a December 19 mediation and offered to give back some $350 million in healthcare costs. But the supermarket chains are still reportedly demanding a rollback three times larger, and they abruptly broke off negotiations until at least after New Year's.

Public support for the strikers remains high, with shoppers leaving the targeted markets nearly empty. But the owners seem willing to absorb significant short-term losses, on the order of $1 billion, in order to cut their long-term costs. They seek to chop the work force into two tiers, paying less to newly hired workers, and to limit owner payments into employee health plans.

Hopes for a settlement were briefly buoyed when Kroger agreed to a favorable contract with the UFCW in three Southern and Eastern states after a two-month strike. The refusal to settle in Southern California reinforces suspicions that it is Safeway, which operates Southern California's Von's and Pavilions stores, that is fueling owners' intransigence—that and the chains' palpable fear of growing competition from nonunion, price-cutting competitors like Wal-Mart. It's an open secret that the traditional grocers are trying to tamp down local labor costs in preparation for a West Coast showdown with the big boxes. Wal-Mart has burgeoned into America's biggest grocer (and the country's largest employer) by paying its workers less, forcing distributors to lower their prices and charging prices 17 to 39 percent lower than unionized stores.

The Los Angeles area remains one of the few urban centers that Wal-Mart has yet to penetrate. But having gained a foothold in suburbia, the chain is now furiously pummeling the gates of the urban core, whose potential consumer base is disproportionately immigrant and poor—and therefore primed to respond to Wal-Mart's discount appeal.

The pro-labor Los Angeles City Council is accelerating efforts to enact legislation that would require big-box grocers opening within the city limits to pay union-level wages. But that effort is

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COMMENT

not without its own divisions and dissent. Former LAPD chief, now councilman Bernard Parks, who represents much of South Central Los Angeles, has already voiced reservations against banning Wal-Mart, arguing that the union-level wage demands stand in the way of much-needed development (this despite manifold studies suggesting that Wal-Marts tend to kill off local businesses rather than encourage their expansion).

The strikers remain popular, and after the new year it's likely that they'll be bolstered not only by organized community support but also by enhanced labor solidarity of the sort offered this past month by the Teamsters. Out on the spirited picket lines, the strikers say they are holding the line for middle-class jobs, not only in Southern California but throughout the country. They know that with their employers intransigent and Wal-Mart lurking in the suburbs, they have to hang tough. MARC COOPER

Marc Cooper is a Los Angeles–based Nation *contributing editor.*

Coverage for No One

My patient John Elias, with a fixed income from Social Security and a small pension, is a perfect candidate for prescription drug coverage. Yet under the new Medicare plan, he is faced with high deductibles, $420 in yearly co-pays and the prospect of $3,600 coming out of his pocket just to receive $1,500 in coverage before a more complete coverage kicks in. But Elias doesn't take his medicines to begin with, because he doesn't have the money to buy drugs. When I explain the new plan to him, he simply shakes his head. "Not for me, Doc," he says.

Elias is paralyzed from the waist down. He suffers from diabetes and hypertension, and he relies on the free samples in my closet to treat these conditions. When I run out of samples, his blood pressure shoots up. His blood sweetens and unsweetens, depending on whether I can offer him his diabetes pill or not. Product samples come in flashy boxes, a few pills per box, designed to lure patients and doctors into using these drugs. Elias swallows the lure, but he wriggles off the hook.

This past fall the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) published a survey of 100 pharmacies. It revealed that cash consumers of prescription drugs pay 100 percent more on average for their medicines than the government pays for Army or veteran supplies, and 130 percent more than Canada pays. The problem is that the uninsured and those caught in the gap have no one doing their negotiating for them, no one who can buy in bulk for them. But the new Medicare plan, rather than using that negotiating power to force more reasonable prices, will force the government as well as the poor and those in the gap to pay retail prices for drugs. A large new cohort will be brought to the prescription drug trough, but on drug-company terms.

The new plan will also create a system whereby patients will have to pay top price for drugs they must buy themselves before coverage kicks in again. Joel Eichel, chief pharmacist at Bigelow Pharmacy in New York City, agrees with NYPIRG that cash customers pay the highest prices for their drugs. Eichel cites as an example Lipitor, the cholesterol-lowering drug. The government pays $41.12 for a month's supply of the 10-milligram tablets. Eichel says that pharmacies pay just under $60 for a month's supply. But the cash customer pays $85.30. Eichel admits that "cash customers are paying a price so that a retailer can make a profit."

At the same time, re-imports of the same drugs at a lower price from Canada will be prohibited without FDA approval. The overall result will be to increase drug-company profits while decreasing affordable medications.

The Feds should have looked at New York State's EPIC plan before imposing a negotiating ban as part of the new coverage. With EPIC, if a Medicare patient is able to show need and an insufficient income, there is only a small out-of-pocket annual fee for medications and a small co-pay; the rest is covered by the state. For those with up to $26,000 in yearly income, the annual fee is only $8 to $300, and co-pays are only $3 to $20 per prescription. New York State, in turn, is responsible for negotiating lower prices with the drug companies for its EPIC members. Elias is not on EPIC because he earns just over $26,000 and so doesn't qualify for its most affordable program. For those not on EPIC, I am like Robin Hood with my drug samples. The drug reps interrupt me in the hallway on my way to caring for Elias and others. I let them do it, because sometimes my samples are a patient's only lifeline.

The new Medicare bill will bring the drug companies easy access to a group that can't afford to underwrite their fancy corporate schemes. Most, like Elias, will simply choose to go without medicine rather than give up their life savings for coverage in name only. For any plan to really work, it must level the playing field. Healthcare, in this case drugs, must be affordable to individuals or the governments that represent them. As things stand, more privatization means more profit, not more healthcare. Only bulk bargaining by the government can drive prices down. The savings in terms of healthcare dollars could then be converted to real drug coverage for those who truly need it. Instead, the new plan ties Medicare's hands, and may ultimately bring about its downfall, as greedy drug companies draw their profits from the taxpayers and the poor. MARC SIEGEL, MD

Marc Siegel, MD, a clinical associate professor of medicine at NYU, writes the "Ask Dr. Marc" feature at www.thenation.com.

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

Representative George Miller highlights the extreme measures the Congressional GOP uses to pass its radical legislative initiatives; Kate M. Levin looks at how the Vieques cleanup promised by the US Navy has been proceeding; Richard Lingeman reviews Studs Terkel's new book, *Hope Dies Last.* And read Katrina vanden Heuvel's weblog about what it's like to appear on Bill O'Reilly's Fox News show. All at www.thenation.com.

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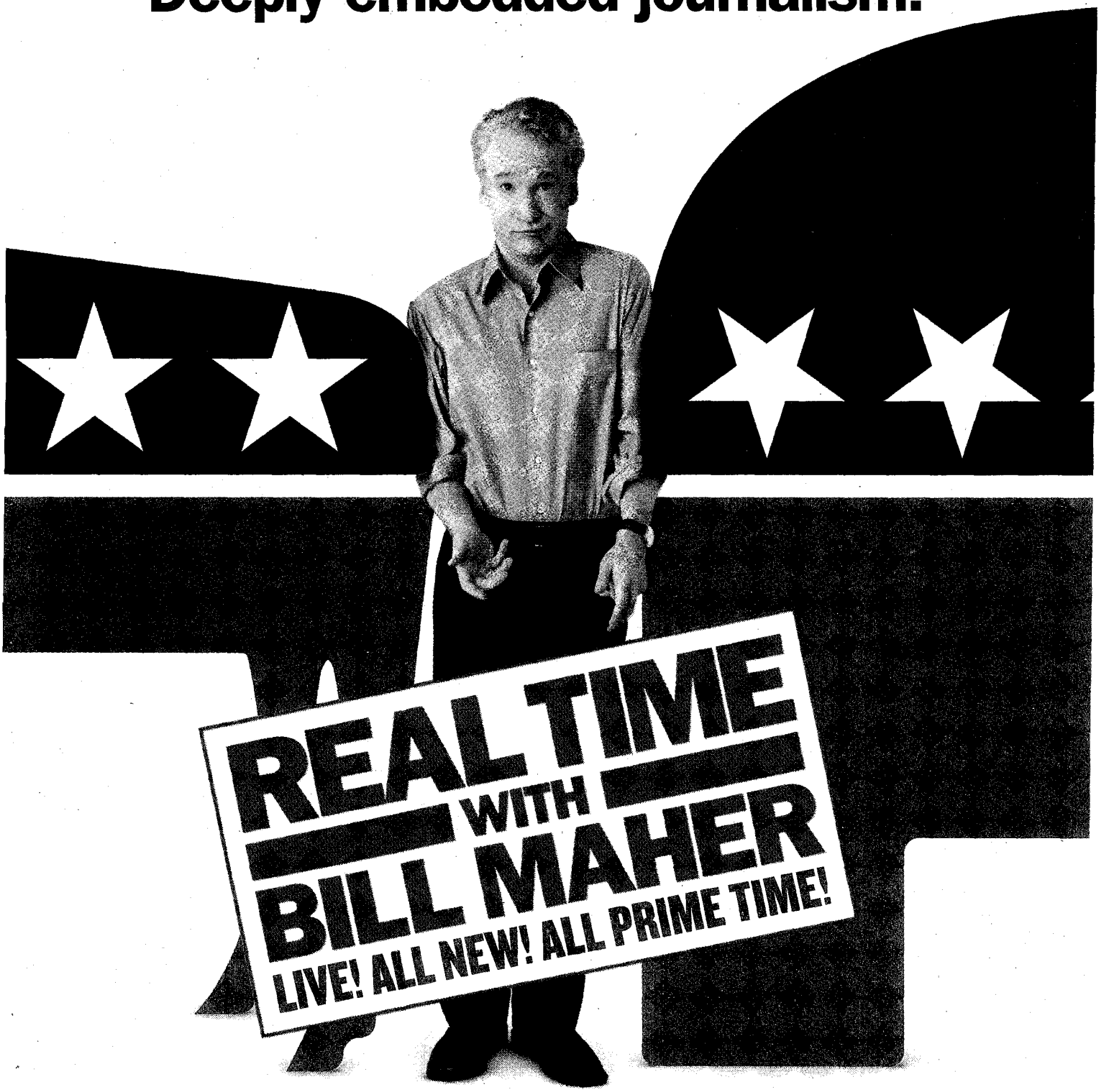

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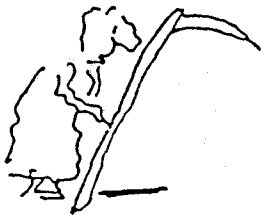
COMMENT

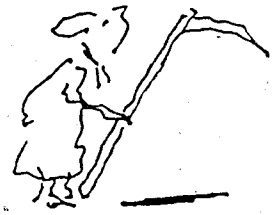
The New Year

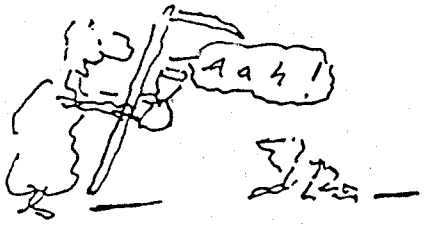
R.O.Blechman

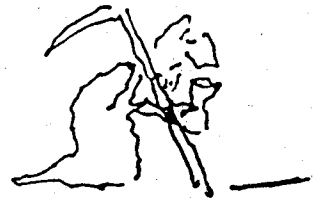


At 11:15 on December 31st...

...Father Time grew concerned.







At 12:00 sharp, the Old Year began.

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KATHA POLLITT

Good News for Women

There was plenty of gloomy news for women in 2003. American women make just under 80 cents on the male dollar for full-time, year-round work. We lost Carolyn Heilbrun, Carol Shields, Rachel Corrie, Nina Simone and Martha Griffiths. Russia tightened its abortion laws; in Slovakia Romani women were sterilized without their permission; Iraqi women were freed from Saddam but confined to their houses by crime and Islamic fundamentalists. The *Globe* ran a slutty cover photo of Kobe Bryant's accuser. The *New York Times* reported that women are having painful and potentially crippling surgery on their toes in order to fit into their Manolos and Jimmy Choos, while in China, where short people are subject to major discrimination, they are undergoing excruciating operations to lengthen their legs. What's the matter with people? Don't answer that.

Still, it's the end of the year, so let's break out the champagne for GOOD NEWS AROUND THE WORLD for women in 2003—accomplishments, activism, bold deeds and grounds for hope.

1. Shirin Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize. The Iranian feminist and human rights crusader is the first Muslim woman to receive this honor. The ayatollahs are furious!

2. Hormone replacement therapy was further debunked. Instead of protecting you from Alzheimer's, it doubles your risk. The unmasking of HRT is a major triumph for the women's health movement, which has claimed for decades that its supposed benefits are drug-industry hype. You can read all about it in Barbara Seaman's devastating exposé, *The Greatest Experiment Ever Performed on Women: Exploding the Estrogen Myth.*

3. Antiwar activism got a feminist edge. The Lysistrata Project saw 1,029 productions of Aristophanes' hilarious, bawdy comedy performed all over the world on March 3. Code Pink took on Bush—and Schwarzenegger—with nervy humor.

4. Barbara Ransby's moving and invaluable *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* illuminated a behind-the-scenes heroine of the civil rights struggle. As Ransby showed, there are other, more egalitarian ways to move forward than by playing follow the leader.

5. A Department of Education commission rejected energetic efforts to water down Title IX, the main legal vehicle promoting equality for women's athletics in schools; the Supreme Court didn't overturn affirmative action.

6. Some movies had leading female characters who were not wives, girlfriends, prostitutes or assassins: *Whale Rider*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Sylvia*, *Mona Lisa Smile*. Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* got raves. Older women were beautiful and sexy in *Swimming Pool*, starring the ever-fabulous Charlotte Rampling, and in *Something's Gotta Give*, where 57-year-old Diane Keaton gets to choose between grumpy-old-man Jack Nicholson and boy toy Keanu Reeves.

7. One in four people in Ireland saw *The Magdalene Sisters*, the movie that exposed the lifelong virtual consignment to hard labor in convent laundries of Irish girls who fell afoul of the church's harsh double standard of sexual morality by, for example, being raped.

8. Afghan women set the gold standard for courage with major conferences in Kandahar and Kabul to push for women's rights in the new constitution. At the *loya jirga*, 25-year-old delegate Malalai Joya electrified the world when she accused the mujahedeen who control the assembly of destroying the country in the early 1990s.

9. In *Lawrence v. Texas*, the Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws criminalizing gay sex. The Massachusetts Supreme Court, headed by a woman, ruled that the state Constitution required that gays should be able to marry.

10. Amina Lawal, condemned to death by stoning by a Nigerian Sharia court for having sex out of wedlock, was set free on appeal.

11. Prodded by an ACLU lawsuit, Michigan stopped drug-testing welfare recipients (only 7.8 percent came up positive, by the way—the same as at your office) as well as applicants.

12. Jessica Lynch showed herself a real heroine by refusing to go along with the propaganda parade.

13. Seventy-eight-year-old Essie Mae Washington-Williams confirmed longstanding rumors that she is the daughter of racist Senator Strom Thurmond and his family's 16-year-old black maid, Carrie Butler. That Strom died at 100, reputation intact, definitely proves that God does not exist.

14. In New York, the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit upheld the 2001 ruling in *Nicholson v. Scoppetta* that child services can't take away the children of battered women.

15. Louise Glück, who has written poems that are burned into my brain, became Poet Laureate, only the ninth woman to hold the post in the past sixty-six years.

16. Desperately poor women in Nigeria's Niger Delta staged militant demonstrations—including stripping—against Shell, demanding that the company employ locals and share the wealth with the community. They won!

17. An FDA panel gave the thumbs-up to making emergency contraception an over-the-counter drug. Teen pregnancy, still too high, has hit a historic low.

18. Under heavy attack from women, DaimlerChrysler abandoned its sponsorship of the Lingerie Bowl, a pay-per-view Super Bowl halftime event involving models playing full-contact football in their underwear. Turns out women buy cars too.

19. Lieut. Gen. William "Jerry" Boykin, who thinks Allah is an idol and that God put Bush in the White House, quoted his ex-wife as follows: "I don't love you anymore, you're a religious fanatic, and I'm leaving you."

20. The Dixie Chicks survived. Pro-war crowds stomped on their records, Clear Channel refused to give them airplay and Christopher Hitchens called them "f**king fat slags." But they're still singing to sold-out crowds, and they're still great.

Hoping you are the same,

Happy New Year! ■

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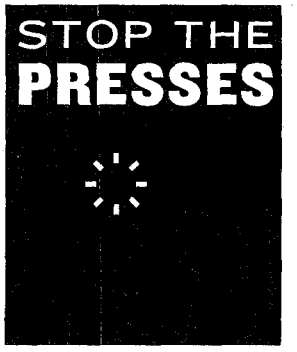
ERIC ALTERMAN

Washington Goes to War (with Howard Dean)



Saddam Hussein may be out of his spider hole, but Washington's real enemy is still at large. His name: "Howard Dean"—and nobody in America poses a bigger threat to the city's sense of its own importance. *New Republic* writer Michelle Cottle returned from maternity leave to find Washington fit for a "Tarantino-style blood bath," with the Democratic front-runner cast as a "paleoliberal...a heartless conservative...too naïve to beat Bush...too politically cynical to trust...a Stalinist...[and] a neofascist [who] kills babies and drinks their blood."

In its self-appointed role as semiofficial punditocracy politburo, the *Washington Post* editorial board issued what ABC News's *The Note* properly termed "a button-popping, eye-bugging anti-Dean editorial" that it undoubtedly hoped would serve as Dean's political death sentence. Expressing editorial shock and awe over Dean's unarguably accurate observation that Saddam Hussein's capture left the United States no safer than before, *Post* editors termed the candidate's views to be "not just unfounded but ludicrous" and complained of his "departure from the Democratic mainstream."

The Note observed that "history might record that this piece stops The Doctor from being his party's nominee," but the hysteria embedded in its analysis could be found nearly everywhere in the media. Over at the *New York Times*, David Brooks, who appears to have taken over Russell Baker's comic spot on the op-ed page, contrasted Dean with the Bush Administration. He noted, apparently sincerely, that the latter was suffering "an insincerity crisis" owing to its "honesty and candor," along with its "candor and forthrightness." Meanwhile he smirks at Dean as being "the only guy who goes to the Beverly Hills area for a gravitas implant." Dean's crime: offering up a moderate, Clintonesque foreign-policy speech to the Pacific Council of World Affairs.

While the *Post* editors and Brooks speak for hard-line neocons, Dean receives no less abuse at the hands of many genuine liberals. My colleague at the Center for American Progress, Matthew Miller, attended the speech and found it lacking, not in substance, which he thought properly Clintonian, but in presentation. "When Dean barked it out, it felt smaller and shabbier, as if he were lecturing us on simple facts we ought to have known." Miller worries at length about what it means that Dean accidentally thanked US soldiers for their "services" rather than "service." Jonathan Chait, so obsessed he now operates an anti-Dean blog at *The New Republic*, also admits that the position that so exercised the *Post* poohbahs is "narrowly true." Chait's problem with Dean, and I quote, is that the Vermont governor "gives off the vibe that he likes to equivocate about the bad guys rather than recognize them for what they are" (what a bummer that Dean dude is...).

ABC's Sam Donaldson made the same silly point, admitting that "in context, you know what he's saying," but when normally perspicacious pundits like Miller and Chait talk in terms of "feelings" and "vibes," something more than policy disputes are at work. Howard Kurtz, the *Washington Post*'s walking conflict of interest and barometer of conventional wisdom—named by the American Conservative Union as one of the most reliable reporters—offers up a clue to the journalistic zeitgeist when he complains of Dean, "Reporters who have spent hours with Dean express surprise that he never asks a single question about them." (Would Kurtz feel better if Dean said, "So, Howie, does CNN pay you more to report on the *Post* or does the *Post* pay you more to report on CNN?")

Another part of the problem is that punditocracy poster boy Joe Lieberman is currently more likely to get the Republican nomination than the Democratic one—and more deserving as well. Dean is being punished, in part, for cleaning Joe's clock. Kurtz speaks for fellow Lieberman lovers when he insists, sans evidence, that "Dean and the war's opponents have not yet come up with a convincing argument that the status quo would have been preferable." Just whom Kurtz has in mind when he employs the phrase "convincing" is left undefined, of course. It obviously does not apply to most of the planet's population, since outside the United States, only Israelis supported Bush's invasion, and that was before anyone was aware of just how dishonest were the Administration's arguments for war and incompetent its postwar planning. Even following Saddam's capture, however, 42 percent remain convinced that the war was not worth fighting; 78 percent of Americans questioned professed to share Dean's view that Saddam's capture did nothing to reduce the threat of terrorism—a correct judgment, apparently, as evidenced by the current orange alert.

Dean has some problems, no doubt, but the pundits hardly seem to notice that George W. ("You can't distinguish between Al Qaeda and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror") Bush cannot pretend to defend deceiving the nation into war anymore. When ABC's Diane Sawyer pressed him in an interview about whether Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction or merely would have liked to have them, Bush replied contemptuously, "What's the difference?" (Try this, Mr. President: "I shot that man, Your Honor, because he pointed a gun at me and was about to pull the trigger," or "I shot that man, Your Honor, because he looked like he was thinking about getting a gun.")

We've all been to this movie before, of course, just one election ago, and it's therefore no surprise that the anti-Dean media fury has increased exponentially with Al Gore's brave, antiestablishment endorsement. In the meantime, the question of the Democratic nomination has come down to this: Will this election be about turning out your base, or winning over swing voters? Gore did the latter but not the former. He won the election, but, thanks to Ralph Nader's megalomania (with an assist from the SCLM—So-Called Liberal Media—and Gore's own crappy campaign), not by enough to prevent the Supreme Court from handing it to Bush. Today, the nation remains no less divided than four years ago, with about 20 percent of the vote up for grabs. The punditocracy has chosen its side. Perhaps it's time the rest of us choose ours. ■

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ARTICLES

CAITLIN DOVER

A Visit With Castro

BY ARTHUR MILLER

Like a lot of other people's feelings toward Cuba, mine have been mixed in the past decades. Apart from press reports, I had learned from film people who had worked there that the Batista society was hopelessly corrupt, a Mafia playground, a bordello for Americans and other foreigners. So Castro storming his way to power seemed like a clean wind blowing away the degradation and subservience to the Yankee dollar. What emerged once the smoke had cleared finally turned into something different, of course, and if I chose not to forget the background causes of the Castro revolution, the repressiveness of his one-man government was still grinding away at my sympathy. At the same time, the relentless US blockade at the behest, so it appeared, of a defeated class of exploiters who had never had a problem with the previous dictatorship seemed to be something other than a principled democratic resistance.

The focus of all these contradictions was Castro himself; this man, in effect, was Cuba, but when my wife, the photographer Inge Morath, and I were invited in March 2000 to join a small group of "cultural visitors" for a short visit, we went along with no thought of actually meeting the Leader but merely to see a bit of the country. As it turned out, soon after our arrival he would invite our small group of nine to dinner and the following day, unannounced, suddenly showed up out in the country where we were having lunch in order to continue the conversation.

By March 2000, the time of our meeting, the future of Cuba was the big question for anyone thinking about the country. Our group was no exception. We were, apart from my wife and myself, William Luers, former head of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and ambassador first to Venezuela and later to Czechoslovakia, and his wife, Wendy, a committed human rights activist; novelist William Styron and his wife, Rose; book agent Morton Janklow and his wife, Linda; and Patty Cisneros, philanthropist organizer of a foundation to save Amazon culture. The only nonspeakers of Spanish were the Styrons, Janklows and I.

Expecting to simply wander in the city and perhaps meet a few writers, we were surprised our second day by the invitation from Castro to join him for dinner. Later, it would come clear that "Gabo" (Gabriel García Márquez), Castro's friend and supporter as well as a friend of Bill Styron, had most probably been the author of this hospitality. I was greatly curious, as were the others, about Castro and at the same time slightly guarded in my expectations.

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Having had a certain amount of experience with Soviet and Eastern European officialdom in the arts, particularly as head of International PEN for four years, I expected to have to do a lot of agreeable nodding in silence to statements manifestly silly if not at times idiotic. Unelected leaders and their outriders are unusually sensitive to contradiction, and the experience of their company can be miserably boring. However, Castro was mythic by this time, and the prospect of an hour or two with him was something to look forward to.

I'll mention only two or three observations I had made in Havana before our dinner. The city itself has the beauty of a ruin returning to the sand, the mica, the gravel and trees from which it originated. The poverty of the people is obvious, but at the same time a certain spiritedness seems to survive. Poor as they are there is little sense of the dead despair one finds in cities where poverty and glamorous wealth live side by side. But this is all appearances, which do count for something but not everything. A guide I happened upon with whom I had a private chat—answering my questions, I should add, and not volunteering—said that it was simply not possible for anyone to live in Cuba on a single job. Educated, clearly disciplined, he could not keep his deep frustration from boiling over as he explained that he worked for a government tourist agency that charged large fees to foreign clients for his services while he received a pittance. If this was not exploitation he did not know the meaning of the word.

Havana has the beauty of a ruin returning to the sand, the mica, the gravel and trees from which it originated.

But there may be another dimension to unhappiness like his. I walked around near the lovely old Hotel Santa Isabel, where we were staying, and a few blocks away sat down on a park bench facing the pleasantly meager traffic on the Malecón, the broad road around the harbor. Presently, two guys showed up and sat beside me, deep in discussion. They were exceedingly thin, neither had socks, one wore cracked shoes and the other disintegrating sandals, their shirts were washed and unironed with shredded collars, they were both in need of a shave. They had a way of sitting crouched over crossed knees while sucking on cigarettes and staring at the flowing away of time as they talked, reminding me of street people in New York, Paris, London. A taxi pulled up to the curb in front of us and a lovely young woman stepped out.

She was carrying two brown paper bags full of groceries. Both men stopped talking to gape at her. I saw now that she was beautiful and tastefully dressed and, more noticeable in this proletarian place, was wearing high heels. One white tulip arched up from one of the bags and drooped down from its long slender stem. The woman was juggling the bags to get her money purse open, and the tulip was waving dangerously close to snapping its stem. One of the men got up and took hold of one of the bags to steady it, while the other joined him to steady the other bag, and I wondered if they were about to grab the bags and run.

Instead, as the woman paid the driver, one of them gently, with the most tender care, held the tulip stem between forefinger and thumb until she could get the bags secured in her arms. She thanked them—not effusively but with a certain formal dignity, and walked off. Both men returned to the bench and their avid discussion. I'm not quite sure why, but I thought this transaction remarkable. It was not only the gallantry of these impoverished men that was impressive, but that the woman seemed to regard it as her due and not at all extraordinary. Needless to say, she offered no tip, nor did they seem to expect any, her comparative wealth notwithstanding.

Having protested for years the government's jailing and silencing of writers and dissidents, I wondered whether despite everything, including the system's economic failure, a heartening species of human solidarity had been created, possibly out of the relative symmetry of poverty and the uniform futility inherent in the system from which few could raise their heads short of sailing away.

The poverty is apparently close to catastrophic. On this same lively harbor road are stoplights that, when they turn red, are a signal for a dozen or so young women and girls to approach the halted cars as though out of nowhere. They are not garishly dressed and their makeup is subdued. I asked our driver what they were doing, and he said they were "hitching rides." He did not turn to meet my gaze but kept his eyes straight ahead, obviously unwilling to pursue the subject. This kind of display was forbidden during the Soviet-dominated years, probably because the economy was not quite so desperately bad and perhaps as well out of deference to Soviet puritanism. Now the pressure of outright hunger was too great to hold back.

I met with an acting class in the theater school after they had shown me a beautifully modulated performance of a surreal student play in which a crucifixion suggests a symbolization of the HIV/AIDS anguish. On the lawn outside, I faced about a hundred of them, young and avid and bursting with hope and energy, wanting to know all about "Broadway." When I told them that "Broadway" had been captured almost exclusively by musicals and pure entertainment and that the few straight plays were limited runs for stars, they looked unhappy and really didn't want to hear the bad news. Nothing, it seems, can tarnish the success and hopefulness that most things American convey. One thing is sure, given the chance they'd have rushed in a body to Times Square.

On arriving in the Palace of the Revolution for our dinner, my wife was immediately required to give up her Leica before meeting Castro. The man taking the camera promptly dropped it from a high bin to the stone floor. The palace is pre-Castro, very modern and aggressively opulent, with gleaming black stone walls and checkered floors, all of it immaculately kept. We entered an anteroom leading into the dining room and suddenly there was Castro, not in uniform as one always sees him in photographs but in a blue pencil-striped suit that, unpressed as it was, must not have been worn very often. Despite the suit, my quick impression was that had he not been a revolutionary politician he might well have been a movie star. He had that utterly total self-involvement, that need for love and agreement and the overwhelming thirst for the power that comes with total approval. In this crowded antecham-

Arthur Miller's plays include Death of a Salesman *and* The Crucible, *recently revived on Broadway. This article is the epilogue to* Cuba on the Verge: An Island in Transition *(Bulfinch), edited by Terry McCoy.*

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ber his retinue, as with most leaders everywhere, were supremely agreeable and one sensed immediately their absolute submission to the Leader. Whatever else he is, Castro is an exciting person and could probably have had a career on the screen.

Luers, in effect our senior shepherd, introduced our members in Spanish, and Gabo added a few words of explanation to identify us for Castro. García Márquez is quite short and the rest of us men are six feet or over, so that he stood looking up at Castro and the rest of us like a new younger boy in school. His friendship with Styron and his English started things off fluently, so that between them and Castro's conversations with Luers and Wendy, his wife, and Patty Cisneros and Inge, a loud hubbub banged against the walls. Suddenly Castro looked at me over the heads of the others and nearly shouted, "What is your birthday!"

"October 17, 1915," I replied, pretending I was not astonished at the question.

He now pointed his long index finger at his right temple. All went silent. An expression of deep-delving sagacity settled over his face as he kept the finger pressed against his head. I sensed hambone overacting, but then recalled paintings of Cervantes's Knight of the Sad Countenance, the heaven-directed gaze, the scraggly beard, the slanty eyebrows, the immemorial dark Spanish mournfulness, and Castro began to look normal. Now he raised the finger to point upward like a censorious teacher. "You are eleven years, five months and fourteen days older than I." (I can't recall the exact figures, but this will do.) Congratulatory laughter burst out and brightened the air. There was something almost touching in this childish demonstration of his calculating ability, and one recognized again his boyish hungering for the central distinction in a group. I thought of his idolization of Hemingway, another star who I am sure had felt the same driving need in himself. It was easy to imagine how they must have appreciated each other.

Castro had that total self-involvement, that need for love and agreement and overwhelming thirst for the power that comes with total approval.

Now, with a wicked look in his eye, he turned to Wendy Luers. In midafternoon she had gotten us all out of the minibus the government had provided and into taxis that had taken us to the home of a dissident, Elizardo Sánchez. There we learned what was rather obvious—that despite the man's having been jailed a number of times for writing and distributing antigovernment publications, he was presently free but without any detectable influence. Knowing that his house was bugged he felt free to say whatever he liked, since his positions were already well-known. And if any of us had imagined that the visit was secret, we were disabused by the friendly TV cameraman who photographed us out in the street as we left. So much for our taking taxis instead of the government bus.

Now, addressing Wendy Luers primarily, Castro leaned forward and said, "We hear you were all missing for a couple of hours this afternoon! Were you shopping?" A flash of fierce irony crossed his face before he joined in our laughter. And so to dinner.

A meeting had been arranged the previous afternoon, no doubt through the writers union, with some fifty or so Cuban writers. Initially the organizers had expected only a few dozen on such short notice, but they had had to find a larger space when this crowd showed up. We encountered a rather barren auditorium, a speaker's platform and an odd quietness for so large a crowd. What to make of their silence? I couldn't help being reminded of the fifties, when the question hanging over any such gathering was whether it was being observed and recorded by the FBI.

It was hard to tell whether Styron's or my work was known to this audience, almost all of them men. In any case, with the introductions finished, Styron briefly described his novels as I did my plays, and questions were invited. One man stood and asked, "Why have you come here?"

Put so candidly, the question threw my mind back to Eastern Europe decades ago; there too it was inconceivable that such a meeting could have no political purpose. Styron and I were both rather stumped. I finally said that we were simply curious about Cuba and were opposed to her isolation and thought a short visit might teach us something. "But what is your message?" the man persisted. We had none, we were now embarrassed to admit. Still, as we broke up a number of them came up to shake hands and wordlessly express a sort of solidarity with us, or so I supposed. But in some of them there was also suspicion, I thought, if not outright, if suppressed, hostility to us for failing to bring a message that would offer some hope against their isolation. But back to the dinner with Fidel...

There were fantastic shrimp and spectacular pork, dream pork, Cubans being famous for their pork. (Castro, however, ate greens, intending to live forever.) Our group sat intermixed with Cubans, government ministers and associates, several of them women. Styron sat alongside Castro and his fabulous instantaneous interpreter, a woman who had been in this work the past quarter-century. Surrounding the table was a plastic tropical garden beautifully lit, possibly to suggest the sort of jungle from which the Revolution had sprung.

It quickly became clear that instead of a conversation, we were to have what seemed a rather formalized set of approaches to various ideas springing from the Leader's mind. Most of these have left my memory (after seven or eight months), but I can recall Castro suddenly looking severe as he spoke of the Russians' dumb stubbornness in all things, and his imitating their basso voices as they stuck to some absurd proposition despite all contrary evidence. What he seemed to hold against them primarily was their disloyalty amounting to perfidy—they had not stuck it out as real revolutionaries had to. But Luers, who next day would have a private conversation with him lasting hours, learned that his principal beef was the Soviets' refusal to back his attempts at starting revolutions in various Latin American and other countries. They wanted no confrontation with the United States and in his view were contemptibly unrevolutionary.

At the dinner he also took a few stabs at the CIA and its numerous assassination attempts against him, but here he affected to be more amused than angry, if only because they had blown back in American faces. And one couldn't miss a certain air of settled or even haughty confidence vis-à-vis America; it was almost as though Cuba were the great power and America some sort of unpredictable adolescent who periodically threw stones and broke

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his windows. However, he is said never to sleep twice in the same house, and his private movements are known to very few. What I do clearly recall is his leafing through a book of Inge's photographs, given to him that evening, and on seeing them promptly ordering an underling to return her her camera. And he had no objection to her photographing him the rest of the evening.

We had sat down at about 9:30. At 11:30 I began to wilt, and I recalled that Castro, who was clearly gaining strength with every passing moment, enjoyed staying up all night because he slept during most of the day. I was hardly alone in my deepening exhaustion; clearly his retinue, having no doubt heard his stories and remarks numerous times before, were cranking up their eyelids. Now it was 12:30, and then inevitably it got to be 1:30, and Castro was filling with the energy of his special vitamin pills, perhaps (a bag of which he later gave to each of us). I saw that García Márquez was, as far as one could tell, in a deep doze sitting upright in his chair. Castro was now in full flight, borne aloft by a kind of manic enthusiasm for sheer performance itself. Be it some perfectly well-known scientific discovery or somebody's intelligent perception of whatever sort, he spoke of it as though personally exposing it for the first time. But charmingly, not without ironical self-deprecation and some wit. He was remorselessly on, obviously anxious to occupy as vast a space around him as he possibly could. And how, I realized, could it be any different, when he had been the chief of state for close to half a century, longer by far than any king or president in modern times, except perhaps Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria. And what effect had his endless rule had on Cubans, most of whom had not even been born when he came to power? Indeed, I had asked at our meeting with the writers how the country was going to move from Castro to whoever or whatever was to follow him, and the uneasiness in the audience was palpable and no one would venture a reply. As we were leaving that meeting one man came up to me and said, "The only solution is biological."

Castro took a few stabs at the CIA and its numerous assassination attempts against him, but he affected to be more amused than angry.

At around 2 in the morning I realized that this veritable human engine of sheer joy might well expect us to stay until dawn. Desperate for sleep, before I could really think it through, I raised my hand and said, "Please, Mr. President, forgive me, but when we arrived you will recall that you said I was eleven years, five months and fourteen days older than you." I paused, struck by his sudden brow-lifted look of surprise or even some small apprehension at the interruption. "It is now fifteen days."

He threw up his hands. "I have transgressed!" He laughed and stood up, ending the dinner. When our group departed we were applauded in the street by the grateful retinue.

Next day we were lunching far out in the country, on the porch of a reforestation institute that over the years had planted hundreds of acres of various species of trees on the rolling hills that surround the rustic headquarters building. The air was pure and the silence refreshing. Suddenly, the roar of engines, and in a cloud of dust three large, recent-model Mercedes raced to a halt and the door of the middle one swung open and there was Castro, this time in his green uniform. He mounted the porch to our general greetings and took a chair and settled in.

Styron seemed to be the center of his interest today, and Castro asked him for the names of the best American authors, but of the nineteenth century, explaining with a grin that he wanted to avoid arousing our competitive instinct.

He had never really studied American literature, he said, and knew very little about it. This admission seemed strange, given Hemingway's iconic position in Cuba, with his home a veritable holy site. In fact, it made one wonder whether for Castro there was something almost forbidden in the idea of the enemy's even having a literature, or for that matter a spiritual life, at all. As Styron, unprepared for this display of Castro's remoteness from the culture he was unceasingly castigating, tried to improvise a brief lecture on American literature's high points, I wondered whether Castro might have been as remote from his own country as from ours. One is forever attributing informed wisdom to power, but in the face of the privation around him, should not a wise ruler who even in a free election would doubtless be reelected, nevertheless recognize that after almost fifty years in supreme control the time had come to make way for a regime with new people and possibly more effective ideas?

Watching him at lunch—he ate two leaves of lettuce—one saw a lonely old man hungry for some fresh human contact, which could only get more and more rare as he ages. He might very well live actively for ten years, perhaps even longer as his parents reportedly had done, and I found myself wondering what could possibly be keeping him from a graceful exit that might even earn him his countrymen's gratitude?

The quasi-sexual enchantment of power? Perhaps. More likely, given his history, was his commitment to the poetic image of world revolution, the uprising of the wretched of the earth with himself at its head. And in plain fact, as the chief of a mere island, he had managed to elevate himself to that transcendent state in millions of minds. The more so now, after all other contestants had fallen away and conditions in Latin America and Africa gone from bad to worse, the possibility needed only its right time to erupt again. After all, he had thrown Cuban forces into action in many countries around the world despite his country's poverty and the obstinate resistance of his main sponsor, the now-abominated Soviet leadership.

It would have been too much to expect that after half a century in power he would not become to some important degree an anachronism, a handsome old clock that no longer tells the time correctly and bongs haphazardly in the middle of the night, disturbing the house. Notwithstanding all his efforts, the only semblance of a revolt of the poor is the antimodern Islamic tide, which from the Marxist point of view floats in a medieval dream. With us he seemed pathetically hungry for some kind of human contact. Brilliant as he is, spirited and resourceful as his people are, his endless rule seemed like some powerful vine wrapping its roots around the country and while defending it from the elements choking its natural growth. And his own as well. Ideology aside, he apparently maintains the illusions that structured his political successes even if they never had very much truth in them; to this day, as one example, he speaks of Gorbachev's dissolu-

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tion of the Soviet Union as unnecessary, "a mistake."

In short, there was no fatal contradiction inherent in the Soviet system that brought it down, and so there is nothing in the Castro system or in his take on reality that is creating the painful poverty of the island. The US embargo created this island's poverty out of hand, along with the Russians by their deserting him. It is Don Quixote tilting at windmills which, worse yet, have collapsed into dust.

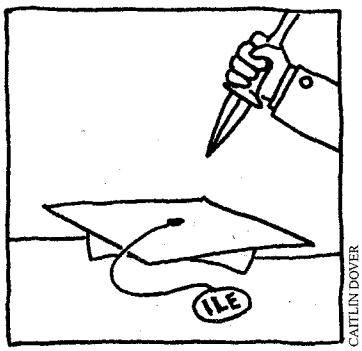
The plaza before the Hotel Santa Isabel is lined with some fifteen or twenty bookstalls displaying for sale battered old Marxist-Leninist tracts, which two caretakers stock each morning and empty each evening, their positions on the shelves undisturbed during the days. Is it possible that someone in the government—Castro, perhaps—imagines that sane persons will be tempted to buy, let alone read, these artifacts of another age? What, one wonders, is keeping it all alive? Is it the patriotic love of Cubans, conformist or dissident, for their country, or is it the stuck-in-cement manic hatred of US politicians, whose embargo quite simply gives Castro an insurance policy against needed change, injecting the energy of rightful defiance into the people? For it is the embargo that automatically explains each and every failure of the regime to provide for the Cuban people. It will need the pathos of a new Cervantes to measure up to this profoundly sad tale of needless suffering. ■

LABOR STUDIES PROGRAMS ARE UNDER ATTACK BY A WELL-FINANCED RIGHT-WING CAMPAIGN.

Class Warfare

DAVID BACON

The best labor studies programs like to think of themselves as activist-oriented—firmly grounded in the gritty world of workers. They don't usually find themselves at the center of high-profile political disputes. But in Sacramento cloakrooms, where lobbyists normally whisper blandishments into legislators' ears, the University of California's labor studies program is now being discussed in language once reserved for reds, and worse. The program, lobbyists say, not only organized meetings to stop the recall of then-Governor Gray Davis, but last summer "union thugs" supposedly even left those meetings to beat up recall petition circulators.



CAITLIN DOVER

The accusations sound pretty wild, even considering California's usual election histrionics, but they're more than just overheated rhetoric. It's payback time in Sacramento. When newly elected Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger unilaterally imposed draconian budget cuts on the state just before Christmas, he wiped out this year's remaining funding for the Institute for Labor and Employment. If he does the same thing with next year's appropriation in March, the institute will be destroyed.

The current set of charges are the latest in a long effort to eliminate the ILE once and for all. Behind them is a political alliance between the state's Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC, the powerful lobby for nonunion construction companies) and the Pete Wilson wing of the state's Republican Party, which has retaken the governor's mansion.

The ABC in particular has been gunning for the ILE for two years, since it conducted a survey in 2001 of "project labor agreements" (or PLAs)—arrangements in which wages, benefits and union status are hammered out before work begins on major construction projects. The ILE published its findings in a working paper. This sounds pretty innocuous, but PLAs are a big roadblock to the growth of nonunion construction. Builders are so incensed about them, and so powerful, that the agreements were actually banned by President Bush as one of his first acts in office (facing Congressional opposition, he later allowed agreements for then-current projects to continue, but prohibited PLAs on new federal projects).

Labor studies programs around the country are watching what is happening to the ILE in California with trepidation. Conservative foundations have been orchestrating a national attack on labor studies. If the opponents of the ILE prevail, activist-oriented programs in Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri and other states will be next on the right-wing hit list.

The controversy raises a fundamental question about labor rights—should joining a union be protected and encouraged by law and public policy, or are unions just a narrow private interest? At the beginning of the builders' campaign in California, Steve Friar, executive director of the San Diego–Imperial County Coalition for Fair Employment in Construction, wrote an op-ed in Riverside's *North County Times* in which he asked, "Unions are private organizations, so why are taxpayers required to cough up money for union propaganda to be filtered throughout the state?" Well, because encouraging collective bargaining has been public policy since 1936. Besides, the same university spends many times that tax money promoting the goals of another private institution—business.

Yet the question indicates how far public discourse has moved since the National Labor Relations Act became the nation's basic law giving unions legal status. The act's preamble holds that employees *should* (not can) band together to bargain. To accept Friar's argument, that social goal has to be deemed a "private" special interest. In fact, this change in public consciousness is one important objective of the attack on labor studies.

David Bacon is a West Coast labor journalist and photographer. His book on the impact of NAFTA over the past decade, The Children of NAFTA, *has just been published by the University of California Press.*

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There's another, unspoken assumption as well. Every economic policy adopted by Congress, and by every state, assumes that the proper purpose of economic activity is the creation of private profit. In the current political climate, profit-making is even equated with democracy. Business schools treat increasing productivity—that is, the rapid and efficient accumulation of profit—not only as economically necessary but as a patriotic duty.

"Can you imagine a business administration program that doesn't take for granted the need to make profits?" asks Elaine Bernard, who heads Harvard's Trade Union Program, "or that doesn't want to talk to business leaders, or place its students in companies?" But when a labor program assumes that workers should strive to raise wages and improve conditions, it's considered selfish—against the public interest.

In July, for instance, at the height of recall mayhem in California, the Institute for Labor and Employment was given the "California Golden Fleece Award" by the Pacific Research Institute, a right-wing think tank. (From 2000 through 2002, PRI received $450,000 from the Sarah Scaife Foundation and $150,000 from the John M. Olin Foundation, both prominent funders of ultraconservative causes.) ILE's crimes, listed on PRI's website, included popularizing unions in high schools and adult schools and doing research that supported campaigns to raise the minimum wage and pass "living wage" ordinances. The PRI called all this evidence of ILE's "anti-capitalism" that "strikes at the heart of a basic economic freedom in America—the right of employers and employees to freely negotiate compensation." The not-so-subtle implication was that workers should negotiate as individuals, not in unions.

The best programs are less focused on unions' institutional needs than on social and economic issues affecting the labor movement.

In August the PRI's agenda became even clearer. In an *Orange County Register* op-ed, PRI staffers Andrew Gloger and Lawrence McQuillan suggested ominously that "a Davis defeat could signal an end to the ILE. But would that be such a bad thing?" The *Register*, voice of the most extreme of the state's Republicans, editorialized, "Here's a program that ought to go, even if the state weren't submerged in red ink."

Finally, the recall forces (mobilized by the website www.recallgraydavis.com) sent out an e-mail appeal on August 17, accusing the ILE of organizing anti-recall workshops "where recall supporters are beaten." In actual fact, UCLA's Downtown Labor Center had been asked by building trades unions to allow use of one of its rooms for a meeting to discuss anti-recall strategy. The center agreed, but the meeting was later moved to another site, and no labor center staff even went to it. The only beating was a sidewalk scuffle in Sacramento, where pro-recallers picketed an anti-recall event that had no connection to the labor center. Nevertheless, recall organizers linked the labor center to the incident. Their site asked readers to send e-mail messages to ILE director Ruth Milkman (a UCLA professor); Kent Wong, director of the UCLA Labor Center; and even Richard Atkinson, then president of the University of California.

One e-mail response asked "Are you completely a criminal?????" "The nation is awakening to you liberal (communist) elitists...why don't u move to cuba," warned another. Meanwhile, ABC lobbyist Matt Tennis, in Sacramento's *Capitol Morning Report*, asked innocently, "Why are California taxpayers paying for a program that trains union officials how to defeat the recall campaign against Gray Davis?"

The attack on the ILE could close the doors of one of the best-funded labor studies programs in the country. Three years ago, the Institute for Labor and Employment was created in cooperation with the California Labor Federation and pro-labor legislators. By winning a permanent multimillion-dollar yearly appropriation, this new umbrella institution was able to begin expanding the decades-old programs at Berkeley and Los Angeles to eight of the system's nine campuses.

The ILE's creation came on the heels of a change in direction in the old programs. In the mid-1990s a new set of academics and staff took charge in Berkeley and Los Angeles, with a much more dynamic vision of the ILE's relationship with workers and unions. The Labor Center in Los Angeles became an institution in which students, academics and union organizers studied the increasing role of immigrants in the Los Angeles work force. The Center for Labor Research and Education in Berkeley gave a home to labor activists who formed the Labor Immigrant Organizing Network, and then wrote the resolution that changed the position of the AFL-CIO itself on immigration.

The activism of immigrant workers in California certainly wasn't making the construction industry happy. In one 1992 strike alone, thousands of immigrant drywall workers paralyzed home construction in Southern California—just one of many such battles. So a labor center with real links to those workers and the unions helping them was not something the builders were disposed to like.

This same change in the direction of labor studies has taken place far beyond California, reflecting a larger effort among labor academics to reject the habits and assumptions of cold war, business trade unionism. Cold war–era labor studies programs became large institutions on the campuses of land-grant state universities. They taught labor economics, trained stewards and union negotiators, and examined health and safety problems. But these worthwhile functions were tied to a philosophy of labor-management cooperation, which was founded on the premise that corporations would pursue a policy of enlightened self-interest—acceptance of unions and willingness to bargain.

The era of enlightened corporate self-interest is long gone, however, if indeed it ever existed. For more than two decades the country's largest corporations have busted unions as a normal part of business activity, and have lost whatever interest they had in labor-management cooperation. It should be no surprise, then, that the end of union acceptance in the workplace should bring with it an end to the prestige of labor-management cooperation in academia. If employers don't want it, who does?

In truth, the best labor studies programs these days aren't very interested in labor-management cooperation either. In general, they are less focused on the institutional needs of unions and more attuned to the larger social and economic issues affecting the labor movement. "Teaching students how to file grievances and write

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unfair labor practice charges in an era in which workers are fired in 31 percent of all organizing drives is pretty irrelevant," says Tom Juravich, director of the Labor Relations and Research Center at the University of Massachusetts.

"There are two different ideas of labor studies," explains Bernard. "One puts the labor movement under a microscope for outside people to examine it. When the labor movement was on the ascendant in the 1960s and '70s, universities saw them as a powerful institution in society. That was good, but the guiding idea in industrial relations was how to stop struggle and have labor peace, how to quiet people down. The other philosophy sees that labor is about working people, and is involved with them. We would expect to see programs like that come under attack."

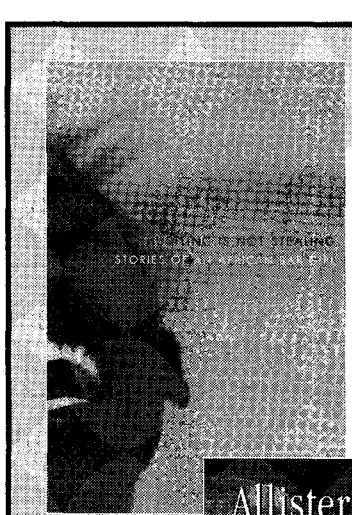
In university industrial-relations departments of the cold war era, union-related studies were a small part of larger programs that analyzed ways to boost productivity and otherwise help employers manage workers. Today the conservative academics Bernard describes have gone off to business schools to teach human resource management. That leaves the field of labor studies smaller, but sharper. And that's the threat that right-wing think tanks have identified.

Writer Steven Malanga has been their primary national voice. Malanga was given a grant by the Brunie Fund for New York Journalism to mount the initial attack in New York's *City Journal*, published by the Manhattan Institute last summer. Charles Brunie is the institute's chairman emeritus. Like the Pacific Research Institute, the Manhattan Institute is a conduit for funds coming from some of the nation's most conservative foundations—$475,000 from Sarah Scaife and $585,000 from the Bradley Foundation between 2000 and 2002. The John M. Olin Foundation, which gave $951,000, is represented on the Manhattan Institute's board by James Piereson.

"Increasingly, these programs have come to define their mission chiefly as supporting labor and its organizing efforts rather than educating students," Malanga says. Like the PRI, he singles out those activities carried on by labor studies programs that affect the poor and immigrants, heaping scorn on studies defending the minimum wage and supporting living-wage ordinances.

One suspects that Malanga would not have been satisfied, even twenty years ago, with a business-union approach to labor studies. Yet he yearns for that past "when labor bosses were culturally conservative, supported pro-growth policies, and sent their hardhats to battle long-haired students over the war in Vietnam." Today, he fulminates, labor studies programs "dispatch student interns to help unions organize" and "use classrooms to push the labor movement's tendentious views of privatization, globalization, and corporate America," substituting "propaganda and activism for the disinterested pursuit of truth."

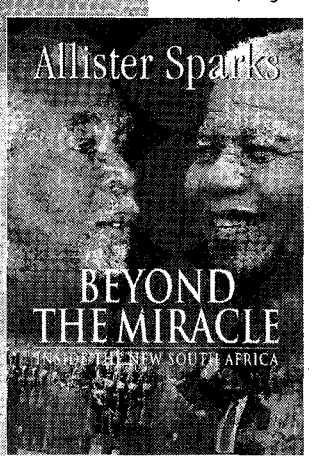
Of course, the discussions in college classrooms of privatization and globalization, or even the miserable wages of the university's own immigrant janitors (not to mention teaching assistants themselves) are not held as a result of orders from the AFL-CIO. These are burning questions for a whole generation of young people. Labor studies programs that don't engage them run the risk of being irrelevant, and left without students. Juravich says simply,



AFRICAN JOURNEYS

Hustling Is Not Stealing
Stories of an African Bar Girl
John M. Chernoff

"This book . . . is an incredible inspiration. Most of the time we sit around over dinners with friends and talk about how the world is going to hell in a handbasket. But from the unlikely perspective of one of those presumably pitiable statistics comes a laughing voice of hope. . . . An epic snapshot, a deeply serious and profound look at another world told as a satiric ironic comedy. Hawa offers a radically alternative approach to life and living—possibly a view more in keeping with the unstable dangerous post-everything world we live in than the out-of-date pretzel logic of the West."—David Byrne



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Allister Sparks

In this book, a distinguished South African journalist provides a wide ranging and unflinching account of the first nine years of democratic government in South Africa. Covering both the new regime's proud achievements and its disappointing failures, Allister Sparks looks to South Africa's future, asking whether it can overcome its past history and current global trends to create a truly nonracial, multicultural, and multiparty democracy.

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"Students are less interested in the AFL, and more in sweatshops."

The program at the University of Massachusetts was also reorganized in the early 1990s. According to Juravich, the old labor studies programs made the mistake of clinging to a service model for curriculum. "Our program and California's moved away from that. We don't wait for the labor movement to tell us what to do. We initiated research into the work force of our area, like the 3,000 fish-processing workers in New Bedford. We do strategic research for organizing, to see how power flows. I understand that feels inappropriate to people threatened by our independence and the strategic nature of what we do. That's why our field is in crisis, with an attack on the major player and on our funding. It's a very dangerous time."

Following his first foray against labor studies, Malanga wrote a second *City Journal* article this fall, in which he repeated the same distortions peddled by the ABC and its recall allies. This time he accused the ILE of digging up "dirt on major property owners and investors, studying ways to organize young workers in California's supermarket industry, and researching how best to fight the privatization of welfare services." Like his friends at PRI, he too ends with a threat. "The fat public funding for projects of questionable academic value is unlikely to survive in the new Schwarzenegger era—along with the fat public funding for unneeded layers of unionized government employees."

The long knives are out, and the ILE may just be the first to feel their sharp cuts. ■

For more information, go to the ILE website: www.ucop.edu/ile. To send a message to legislators go to: www.unionvoice.org/campaign/uclaborcenters.

TEEN GIRLS ARE THE TARGET MARKET FOR A NEW WAVE OF STRIPPER-INSPIRED MERCHANDISE.

Strip Till You Drop

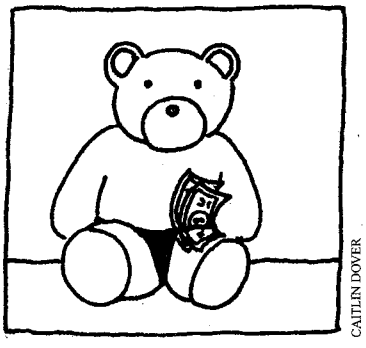
ALISON POLLET AND PAGE HURWITZ

Dear Santa,

All I want for Xmas this year is a new bicycle, my very own pony and a stripper pole for the rec room. Thanks, Santa!

Luv,
Amber Anykid U.S.A.

P.S. Strawberry Shortcake thongs make rad stocking stuffers!



CAITLIN DOVER

Postal workers should not have been shocked this year to receive scores of Christmas wish lists just like little Amber's. Why? Well, in case you haven't tuned in to teen or tween media lately, stripping has gone mainstream. Teenagers of the new millennium have grown up watching college students give lap dances on MTV's *The Real World*; they've listened to Christina Aguilera's album *Stripped*; they've taken cardio strip class at the gym, perused the mall for thongs and flavored body glitter, played video games that feature strippers on their Xboxes and GameCubes, and watched endless music videos for which strip clubs and the denizens thereof provide the *mise en scène*. TV shows and movies from *Stripperella* to *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* regularly feature voluptuous heroines flashing the flesh. Indeed, a questionnaire for college-age participants in *The Real Cancun*, the 2003 "reality movie" depicting spring-break mayhem, posed the question: "What's the wildest thing you've ever done?" Responses included: "Stripped at a bar," "Gone on top of a bar and flashed" and "Stripped in a club." Somebody ought to break it to these co-eds: Stripping isn't so wild anymore—it's kid stuff.

Alison Pollet writes fiction for middle-grade readers. Her novel Nobody Was Here *is forthcoming from Orchard Books/Scholastic. Page Hurwitz is a stand-up comedian and screenwriter.*

Of course, for many girls who buy it, stripper-inspired fare isn't actually about disrobing in public or even having sex but about cultivating what writer and sexpert Susie Bright calls "the essence of titillation," a coy yet brazen, look-but-don't-touch sexual persona. "This is very appealing to the young crowd, the virgins, the pre-orgasmic, who want to flaunt and test their sexuality without actually having to *do* the deed," says Bright. Along with marketing executives promoting their goods, many adolescents embrace these products as a harmless and fun way to wield sexual power, defending their right to express themselves through "Porn Star" T-shirts and "Hot Buns" hot pants, and dismissing those who object as dour, repressed.

Still, critics like Jean Kilbourne, best known for her documentary series *Killing Us Softly*, about gender representation in advertising, warn that the trend is more constraining than liberating, invoking a "very narrow, clichéd version of what's sexy as opposed to any kind of authentic sexuality." It's a debate whose terms are familiar, from the feminist sex wars of the 1980s to the 1990s rise of "girl power" in pop culture to the explosion of feminist cultural criticism that snubbed the old-school women's movement for its perceived lack of an ironic sensibility. But the discussion has acquired a new dimension now that a mass-marketed ideal of female sexiness derived from stripper culture is being sold to an ever younger set. The stripper-infused products aimed at young girls are a creepy synthesis of cute and tawdry—seemingly designed to appeal to a 12-year-old's tastes while gently easing her into the adult arena.

The most ubiquitous stripper-inspired purchase a girl can make is a thong, a product with a heritage in exotic dancing—in 1939 New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia decreed that the city's nude

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dancers cover their private parts for the World's Fair. Thongs marketed directly to kids and teens often don't resemble standard lingerie—they're usually cotton, not silk or satin, they've got a colored elastic band, and they're not overloaded with lace or frills. Designwise, they tend toward the self-consciously cute, bearing the visage of a recognizable cartoon character, adorned with a saucy saying and/or cheekily girlish iconography—cherries, gingham checks, teddy bears. The thong's ostensible purpose is to hide panty lines, but what ultimately drives the sale is the nice but naughty message its design implies—and sometimes not so subtly. "Feeling lucky?" begs the Smarty thong by David & Goliath. It's white with a green four-leaf clover stamped on the front, and available at teen-girl fashion emporium Delia's. According to market research firm NPD Group, from August 2002 to July 2003 thong sales in the United States climbed to $610 million—up from the previous year's $570 million. *Time* reported that last year girls between the ages of 13 and 17 spent $152 million on them. Thongs average about $6 apiece, and you pay more for a brand name. (A Simpsons thong goes for $8, a simple glitter one for half that.) It's no wonder, then, that licensers are eager to dole out their characters' likenesses for front-and-center crotch placement; in the age of branding, it's all the better if your Hello Kitty thong matches your Hello Kitty lunch box.

Many adolescents embrace these products as a harmless and fun way to wield sexual power, dismissing those who object as repressed.

Click the About Us/Investor Relations link on the home page for mall-based teenage chain store Hot Topic, which in fiscal year 2002 produced earnings of $34.6 million, and you'll learn that, founded in 1989, "the Company believes teenagers throughout the U.S. have similar fashion preferences, largely as a result of the nationwide influence of MTV, music distribution, movies and television programs." Under Intimate Apparel/Panties, recent purchase items included: a Dr. Seuss Cat in the Hat thong, a Cookie Monster bikini panty, a Hello Kitty Goth Girl thong. Borrowing from underwear for little kids, some of these products—retro Mighty Mouse lingerie by Nick and Nora, for one—no doubt appeal to the older consumer who's consciously infantilizing herself to look sexy. But they also seem calculated to attract younger girls who might still harbor some genuine affection for cartoon cuddlies. The Muppet thong is the adolescent equivalent of a toddler's pull-up: somewhere between Underoos and lingerie.

The film *Thirteen* depicts the hypersexualized teen-girl consumer marketplace as inextricably linked to its central character's accelerated downward spiral. It's naïve junior high schooler Tracy's demand for a hipper new wardrobe that sets the plot in motion; Tracy first steals to shop at a risqué boutique and clashes with her mother over a puppy-dog thong emblazoned with the words "Wanna Bone?"

The film clearly resonated with many girls' experiences. Emily and Caroline, 13-year-olds at a Los Angeles private school, use "sexy" to describe the eighth grade's most popular girl, who buys her school uniform in diminutive kiddy sizes so as to reveal more skin. Emily says lots of girls at her theater camp wore thongs and that the kids in her class think thongs are cool, though she bristles: "Who would want to see a 13-year-old's butt?" She and Caroline recently attended a bar-mitzvah where a tattoo artist was hired to airbrush designs onto partygoers' body parts. A popular request, the girls reveal, was Playboy's bunny-head emblem, the allure of which leaves the two momentarily divided. "Kids want it because it's a cute little bunny," says Emily. Caroline begs to differ: "It's Playboy, which makes them sexy or something."

Either way, the Playboy bunny has hopped back into fashion, swishing its cottontail into the teen market. At Hot Topic you can buy bunny trucker hats, pajamas, blankets and pillows. Dr. Jay's carries Playboy bunny rhinestone thongs and camis, sporty shorts and sexy briefs. If for children of the 1970s and '80s the bunny's image is tarnished by connotations of dirty centerfolds and exploitation, Playboy Enterprises is making sure that's not the case for girls of the next millennium. The bunny's getting an extreme makeover; the company's amping up its playful, mildly risqué qualities and de-emphasizing its pornographic ones. Playboy Enterprises still produces X-rated fare, but it relegates it to its adult-only outfit, Spice. "It's rather like Viacom having Nickelodeon [for children] and Showtime [for adults]," company CEO Christie Hefner told *Business Week Online* this past August. Playboy's licensing department targets 18-25-year-olds; they say a crossover into a younger market is unintentional. Yet founder Hugh Hefner—when asked by the *Washington Post* about kids donning Playboy togs—proclaimed, "I don't care if a baby holds up a Playboy bunny rattle."

Retail sales for the Playboy brand's licensed fashion and consumer products have been estimated at more than $350 million for 2003, and the company celebrated its fifty-year anniversary with a November retail launch of limited-edition specialty products. They are in cahoots with rapper P. Diddy's clothing label, Sean John, which is producing bunny-adorned velour tracksuits. There is a Playboy skateboard, a Playboy snowboard and, from M.A.C. Cosmetics, "Playmate Pink" glitter cream and "Bunny Pink" lipstick with a "laser-embossed bunny on the tip." According to the press release, M.A.C. Cosmetics—a company whose progressive advertising tactics have included using openly gay celebrities Elton John and Rupaul as spokesmodels—was inspired by the "sheer fabulousness of the original Playboy Bunnies."

Revamped as cuddly and camp, the bunny is poised to enter the world of family-friendly entertainment with *Hef's Superbunnies*, a cartoon series about Playboy playmates who fight the enemies of democracy. Playboy's entertainment division, Alta Loma, is developing the series with Stan Lee's POW! Entertainment, and the press announcement mentions they're aiming for a mainstream audience, so the superbunnies won't bare it all. Stan Lee, creator of Spiderman and the Incredible Hulk, already has an animated series about strippers on the air. It's the adult cartoon series *Stripperella*; Pamela Anderson lends her voice and image to the superhero Erotica Jones, "a stripper by night and superhero by later night," whose power source resides in her enhanced breasts. On TNN's website you can play Strip-pole-rella, the point of which is to avoid falling objects and pole grease and collect as many dollar bills as you can.

Few have surfed the stripper wave with more success than Joe

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—The Wall Street Journal

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One customer published his view of our guarantee, which we have reproduced below:

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—Dean Rieck,
Direct Marketing magazine
April 2000

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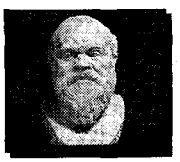
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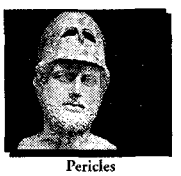
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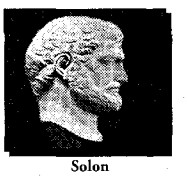
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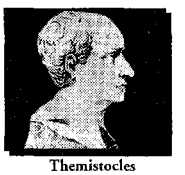
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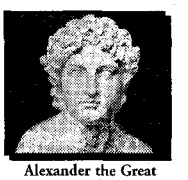
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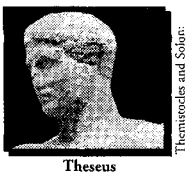
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J. Rufus Fears (Ph.D., Harvard University) is Professor of Classics at the University of Oklahoma, where he holds the G.T. and Libby Blankenship Chair in the History of Liberty. A 15-time award winner for outstanding teaching, he was chosen as Indiana University's first-ever Distinguished Faculty Research Lecturer, and has three times been named "Professor of the Year" at Oklahoma.

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Francis, whose brainchild, *Girls Gone Wild*, is a four-year-old, $100 million entertainment empire solely based on amateur videotapes of college students flashing their breasts. On Amazon.com you can purchase (at about $17 a pop) DVD titles that include *Girls Gone Wild Extreme*, *Black Girls Gone Wild: Funkin' at Freaknik*, and *Girls Gone Wild Doggy Style*, Francis's creation with Calvin Broadus (*a k a* rap star Snoop Doggy Dogg). Unless Francis goes to jail—charges of filming underage girls for a spring break tape are pending in Panama City, Florida—his next venture, *Newsweek* reports, is a chain of Hooters-style restaurants. Francis, who once compared girls' flashing Mardi Gras–style for his videos to feminists burning bras, doesn't hide the fact that he is taking advantage of the opportunity to offer titillation in the guise of liberation. The fact that there are so many willing participants one can attribute partially to the desire for a quick fix of fame and the culture of reality television that engenders that desire, and partially to Jell-O shots. But perhaps this is, to some degree, what 1990s pop culture wrought.

The spring breakers Joe Francis convinces to "go wild," at least the ones of appropriate age, would have also been the target audience when, in 1996, the Spice Girls shimmied onto the pop landscape, singing about how girls should tell guys "what I want, what I really really want," and pumping up their fans with "girl power," a philosophy that ran as deep as "You're a girl, therefore you're powerful," and that could be easily construed as "Look sexy like this and you will be powerful."

On MTV there were more lessons to be learned about girls and power. The 1995 Aerosmith video for the song "Crazy" features actresses Liv Tyler and Alicia Silverstone playing high school students who break out of school one afternoon and hit the road; they fund their joy ride with a trip to a strip club, where Tyler performs a mocking pole dance and Silverstone, dressed in a man's suit, watches gleefully from below. Thanks in part to the video's homoerotic overtones, the striptease seemed rebellious, transformative and empowering, a paradigm replicated in many a girl-centric coming-of-age flick in its wake, among them *Coyote Ugly* (2000), a movie about bartending table dancers (the film's tagline: "Tonight, they're calling the shots").

This generation also grew up concurrently with hip-hop, a genre whose videos have always pushed the envelope in terms of stripper content. Videos are limited in their storytelling capabilities, certainly, and popular early 1990s videos like WreckX'N'Effect's "Rumpshaker" conceded to this limitation, opting for *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*–style locales and high-heeled bikini-clad babes, visual cues that would inform hip-hop videos for the decade to come. Female rappers of the early 1990s adapted what Alondra Nelson, assistant professor of sociology and African-American studies at Yale, calls "masculinist models of rap virtuosity and power as a way to gain respect in hip hop." But eventually, when hip-hop "embraced the pimp archetype," female rappers were forced to "fight back on the same terms, taking up hyper-feminine personas." That means trading the showmanship that comes with skill for the kind of empowerment that comes with stripping. Today's female hip-hop stars, like Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown, are taking their fashion cues from the table-dancing backup dancers and extras who populate male hip-hop stars' videos.

Of course, Madonna's influence on the stripper trend cannot be discounted. While college kids and professors populating cultural studies departments in the early 1990s were eager to endow her pornography-inspired videos and *Sex* book with layered ironic sensibilities, it's possible that irony wasn't translating to those who were children at the time. For example, in the opening to the film *Crossroads*, starring Britney Spears, the character she plays, an uptight good girl on the eve of high school graduation, wears men's underwear and writhes around on her bed to Madonna, who—we're meant to understand—was the soundtrack of the character's early youth. By Act II, Spears's character is on the road both to Los Angeles and girl power, stopping in at a bar for a liberating and lucrative stint of karaoke and pole dancing.

The "Porn Star" tee is this generation's answer to the "I'm With Stupid" shirt; the words were stamped on baby tees, tanks and camisoles and sold at malls across the country. When asked about the shirt, Michelle, 22, a recent graduate of Barnard College, is quick to renounce it as "so five years ago." But she recalls that back in high school, its intention was obvious: to be a calling card, one that says insta-sex. This is helpful for a girl whose look doesn't automatically conjure up sexiness. Wear a Porn Star shirt and, as Michelle says, "you're telling people to see you as sexy, as feminine." Talk to girls about stripper culture, and you notice an interesting phenomenon: Stripping equals sexy and sexy equals feminine. Coupled with the adolescent's age-old desires to look good and be looked at, you've got an odd mix of feminine/sexy bravado.

If girls of the 1950s had only two options, virgin and whore, these clothes seem to blur the line between the two.

As Susie Bright observes, a stripper's costume says "Long for me, try to win me, throw money at me, but you will never really get very far," a message that holds obvious appeal for the junior high school girl who "want[s] to be mirrored, told [she's] beautiful and desirable and sought-after." A girl can easily meet these competing needs with an outfit that features a body-hugging Porn Star shirt and a thong embossed with a padlock design (made by David and Goliath, available at Delia's). These garments may be a far cry from the confining pinafores and protective bloomers of yesterday, but they introduce a new set of problems. Some, like Jean Kilbourne, argue that they promote a brand of sexuality that "has to do with attracting men, and has nothing to do with a girl being the agent of her own sexual desire." If adolescent girls of the 1950s had only two options, virgin and whore, these clothes seem to blur the line between the two. It's a strange day when Hot Topic's "Pay up, sucker!" thong (the words, in bubble letters, encircle a dollar sign) seems a better option for girls than the padlock one, because it smacks less of sexual puritanism. What's most ironic, Kilbourne argues, is that "this is happening in a culture that's not allowing sex ed in class."

Raising these issues with teens without alienating them is a tricky business. Says Michelle: "We all want to be the girl who's comfortable going with her boyfriend to a strip club, who's all 'What up?' with the stripper. You want to be the girl who isn't

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fazed by going to Hooters. Boys like big boobs, big deal. No one wants to look repressed." No doubt, that's music to the makers of *Girls Gone Wild*, a moniker that itself seems to proclaim innocence, as in: "Hey, don't blame me! I happened upon these girls, and, dang, they gone wild!" It's a sure thing, in this climate, that lectures about the hazards of thongs will, if anything, make them more appealing. Look what happened at a Long Island high school when, last spring, teachers chaperoning a senior-class field trip to Florida confiscated string bikinis from students' luggage. The girls argued that they'd been violated, and the community found itself polarized. The melee was even written up in the *New York Times*, which quoted a letter from Catherine Pearce, 18, sent to her local paper, the *Suffolk Times*: "I'm not such a naïve little girl that I'm unaware of my own body, my own sexuality.... What exactly was it that they were protecting me from?"

It's a fair question—one that critics of stripper chic have to be prepared to answer in a way that meets girls where they are. Jean Kilbourne advocates educating teenagers in media literacy and fighting for progressive sex ed in schools. But there may be a more expedient way to deflate the trend. This past November Oprah Winfrey devoted an hour to "releasing your inner sexpot"; overworked moms got stripper makeovers complete with pole-dancing lessons and new lingerie. Moms Gone Wild? Now it's *really* over. ■

Letter From Israel

AIR MAIL
FIRST CLASS
SPECIAL DELIVERY

by Jonathan Shainin

It's a humid Mediterranean morning in late October. We are crowded into a tiny Jaffa military courtroom to witness one day of argument in the lengthy court-martial of five young men who refuse to enlist in Israel's army so long as it is, in their words, "occupying the land of another people and committing immoral acts." No palace of justice, the shabby, windowless room seems to reflect the lack of attention the state would like to see paid to the proceedings within. The makeshift gallery of wooden benches is too small to accommodate the crowd of friends and supporters, which includes many proud parents and grandparents of the accused.

Three uniformed judges sit behind a raised bench at the head of the room, and beneath them, the refusers stand one at a time to face the relentless questioning of Captain Yaron Kostelitz, who embodies every cliché of prosecutorial zeal. He mocks the accused with their own statements—"So you think the war is not really necessary, do you? So you know better than all the generals, and all the decision-makers, on the basis of the enormous experience and knowledge you gathered in your nineteen years of life?"—but their responses remain composed and direct.

"I am refusing," Adam Maor, 20, says calmly, "because people are tortured and killed. I refuse to take part in crimes against the lives of Palestinians." After Maor recalls witnessing Arab villagers attacked by settlers, Kostelitz, becoming impatient, pounces: "Well, did you call the police?" The gallery erupts with derisive laughter, and the whole scene grows more circus-like by the minute. After an endless stream of questions—"If you were in power, would you evacuate the settlements? And what if soldiers refused to carry out this order?"—the audience grows restless. "Why do you keep asking these same hypothetical questions?" one woman yells at the prosecutor in frustration. "This is not reality!" She is promptly ejected by two young military policemen, peers of the boys on trial. "What is this, Russia?" she blurts out as they take her away.

The government has long preferred to sweep incidents of refusal under the rug rather than bring attention to the phenomenon, which they insist is a marginal one, by prosecuting offenders. Most older reservists who refuse call-ups are simply allowed to avoid service; those who are unlucky or make a public show of refusal are jailed briefly and then released. In the past three years alone, more than 1,000 Israelis have refused to serve, but these five—along with a young pacifist, Yoni Ben-Artzi, who was tried separately—are the first to be court-martialed in more than twenty years. It is not their evasion of duty that is at issue so much as their political activities; all were involved in authoring a public letter of refusal that has now been signed by about 350 conscripts, and the state clearly sees a developing tide of public resistance.

In spite of such efforts to quell it, a certain spirit of dissent is in the air, and it has been wafting through some unfamiliar quarters. When twenty-seven pilots announced their own refusal to carry out attacks on civilian areas at the end of September, the first such protest to come from the elite ranks of the Air Force, they were vilified in the press by military and political leaders and threatened with punishment by Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon. But before long, the hawkish Ya'alon was echoing their rhetoric, declaring that the repressive measures in the territories "only generate hatred that will explode in our face." By the time the Jaffa court found the five young refusers guilty in mid-December, four former directors of the Shin Bet, Israel's feared security service, had gathered to denounce the government, and Ehud Olmert, the right-wing deputy prime minister, had proposed a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the territories. And now thirteen more reservists, ultra-elite fighters from the famed Sayeret Matkal—reverently known as "The Unit" in Israel—have seconded the pilots' refusal.

"Israel behaves like a society in a coma, completely opaque and closed," the philosopher Adi Ophir told me a few days after Ya'alon's remarks made front-page news. "But there are cracks in that opacity, symptoms that something momentous is happening. I haven't seen anything like this in a long time." Novelist

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David Grossman, who participated in the writing of the Geneva Accord, said he sees a similar awakening. "People have begun to try to break free from the paralysis in which we were trapped for the past three years, years when we were so frozen in our fears, in our suspicion and hatred, that there was no new thinking."

It was simply past time to speak out, Avraham Burg told me in October. "People had stopped asking questions," he said, "and stopped giving answers." Burg, a Labor Knesset Member who served as Speaker from 1999 to 2003, wrote a surprisingly vehement condemnation of Israeli actions in a widely translated September op-ed, which set the tone for much of what followed. "Israel," Burg wrote, "having ceased to care about the children of the Palestinians, should not be surprised when they come washed in hatred and blow themselves up in the centers of Israeli escapism." With four children currently serving in the army, Burg suggested to me he had particular cause to raise his voice: "For the past thirty-five years," he said, "we have pursued a stupid policy, which sacrifices our children on the altar of settlements, and nobody was saying a thing."

'People have started to realize, much too late, the end of the path on which we've been led.'
—novelist David Grossman

Though serious doubts remain about the highly touted Geneva agreement, it has undermined Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's oft-repeated excuses for delay. "For three years," Burg, another architect of Geneva, says, "the government was happy to have no partner. The burden of responsibility was lifted off their shoulders. But we came and said, 'There is a partner and a partnership.'" The strategies of the Sharon government, which has devoted itself assiduously for three years to pacifying the electorate rather than resolving the conflict, seem to have run aground.

However, the deepest roots of this sudden outbreak of straight talk lay elsewhere, in what Israelis quaintly call the "demographic problem." Nothing is more feared than being overwhelmed by the antagonistic population among whom they have so aggressively intermingled their own people for the past few decades. As Burg confided to me, "I am not afraid of weapons and terrorism. I am afraid of the day that all of them will put their weapons down and say, 'one man, one vote.'"

Veteran political commentator Akiva Eldar suggests that "the demographic threat has always been too theoretical, while the terror threat is all too tangible and personal." But this may no longer be the case. The newspapers are full of concerned editorials fretting over the prospect of a single state encompassing Israelis and Palestinians, alongside reports like the recent alarmist claim by Haifa professor Arnon Sofer that "there is already a non-Jewish majority" between the Jordan and the sea.

As Jeff Halper, an anthropologist and activist who is an expert on the built environment of the West Bank, explains, "for decades, settling the territories was an ongoing campaign, and the consequences were always going to be years down the line." While the government continues to give tacit support to new illegal outposts and authorize new housing starts on existing settlements, these are mere ornaments upon the massive enterprise; the major blocs are complete, the extensive road network is finished and the separation wall is on its way to completion. "Now it's done," Halper laughs, "and the right is coming face to face with the results."

Conventional wisdom holds that the developing "demographic threat" and the emergence of Geneva will force Sharon to act, but nothing dictates what kind of action he will take. When Olmert floated his "unilateral separation" trial balloon, the settler right turned on him with fury and the left was elated. But a closer look suggests little more than a clever attempt to co-opt the renascent momentum for peace for an extension of the war with the Palestinians by other means. In his much-hyped speech on the matter in mid-December, Sharon presented little more than a clever term—"disengagement"—for what his generals call redeployment. The plan is to move the Green Line eastward, rapidly complete the wall, tighten control over East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, and then, as Aluf Benn wrote in *Ha'aretz*, to "close the territories in the West Bank and throw away the key," with no concern for the welfare of the Palestinians who remain behind the wall, or the viability and contiguity of the state they're trapped in. Such proposals are clearly no better than the dreadful status quo, but the cards are all in the hands of Sharon, who still faces no real opposition in the Knesset.

In other words, it is, as always, not yet time to get our hopes up. "People have started to realize, much too late, the end of the path on which we've been led," Grossman says. "But there are two questions: How long will it be before the majority grasps this fact, and how many more lives will be lost before then?"

The intellectual ferment in Israel has not escaped notice on the other side of the Green Line, but for the time being, there is rather less cause for hope there. In fact, the flood of breathless publicity that followed the Geneva announcement seems likely to repeat a critical failing of the Oslo era, in which excitement about international diplomacy obscures the deterioration of local conditions. "It's true that the discourse has changed," says Neve Gordon, an activist who has done extensive humanitarian work in the West Bank. "But on the ground, it's getting worse and worse."

In few places is this deterioration more stark than Qalqilya, the West Bank's fourth-largest city. Sitting atop a massive aquifer, plentiful acres of fertile land make it the "breadbasket of Palestine." But this stroke of geographical providence has been met lately with one more unkind. Qalqilya, which has the bad fortune to sit at the very western edge of the West Bank, has been encircled by Israel's security wall, which has confined the city to a narrow peninsula of land in an effort to keep settlements to the north and south "in" and Qalqilya "out."

Now penned in on all four sides, Qalqilya is accessible only via a single guarded checkpoint nearly a mile to its east. Khaled Shanti, the head of the local branch of the Palestinian Farmers Union, took me on a tour of what little agricultural land remains inside the enclosure. As you head out from the built-up city center, the land unravels into a maze of narrow dirt roads that thread between the plots. You can drive right up to the large barbed-wire embankments, the outer limit of the 100-meter-wide "fence," and what you find there are square parcels of farmland slashed into slender triangles by the barrier. You can see the other side, tantalizingly close, where abandoned greenhouses sit among dried-out citrus groves turned yellow from neglect. Israeli trucks glide past on a nearby highway.

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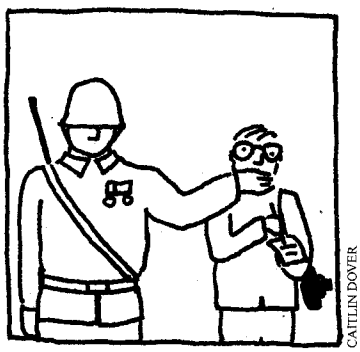
A tall, soft-spoken man in his 60s, Shanti's face radiates sorrow as we walk alongside the concertina wire, and he reels off the damage in numbers: 525 acres of farmland taken by the footprint of the wall, 930 acres stranded on the other side (which, despite its claims to the contrary, the army prevents farmers from tending). All told, 85 percent of Qalqilya's cultivated land has been lost, affecting more than 550 farmers. At least 4,000 residents have already given up and left the city for good, and further flight seems inevitable, since the wall is not going to crumble anytime soon. "But what can we do?" Shanti sighs, and I realize slowly and sadly this is not a rhetorical question. "Do you have any ideas? We have tried everything, and we do not know what to do now." ■

REPORTERS SAY HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS IS GROWING.

Journalists Take Flak in Iraq

LAURA ROZEN

When US Central Command has good news to report in Iraq, as it did after troops from the Fourth Infantry Division captured Saddam Hussein on December 13, it adores the media. But journalists say that when there's bad news—a helicopter crash, a mortar attack—they are increasingly being blocked from covering the story by US soldiers, who frequently confiscate and destroy their film disks and videotapes.


CAITLIN DOVER

This happened to *Detroit Free Press* photographer David Gilkey while covering the crash of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter carrying thirty-six US soldiers, shot down near Fallujah on November 2. His film disk was erased by a soldier from the 82nd Airborne, who then forced Gilkey and other journalists on the scene to a site twenty miles away. "Listen, I have respect for these guys," Gilkey says of the soldiers. "I truly understand that they are upset, and angry, that they've lost friends. The point is, however, you don't have the right to take disks and clean them. When did that become standard operating procedure?"

Chip Somodevilla, a Knight Ridder photographer, was accompanying two Iraqi fishermen on their small boat in the Tigris River in Baghdad on December 9, when shots from a high-velocity rifle exploded in the water under the port bow of their twelve-foot craft.

"We looked in the direction from which it was fired—a mansion formerly belonging to Saddam Hussein's nephew—and noticed several men waving their arms in the air and shouting," Somodevilla e-mailed to his editors after the incident. He and the fishermen drove their boat toward the group of men. One of them turned out to be an American in civilian clothing who was carrying a high-velocity rifle outfitted with a silencer and scope.

"He asked who I was and what I was doing," the photographer said. The American, who appeared to be some sort of Special Operations paramilitary or intelligence official, "asked me to produce identification and then attempted to destroy my press credentials. He forcefully quizzed me about my assignment and then turned to an Iraqi standing nearby" to verify aspects of the photographer's story.

"After being shot at, I felt very threatened and swore to the man that I was an American and that I was on his side," Somodevilla said. "Yeah, John Walker [Lindh, the so-called American Taliban] made a lot of promises too," the American interrogator snapped back. "What have you done for your country?" He let Somodevilla go with the warning, "We're watching you."

"Our journalists in Iraq have been shoved to the ground, pushed out of the way, told to leave the scene of explosions; we've had camera disks and videotapes confiscated, reporters detained," says Sandy Johnson, Washington bureau chief for the Associated Press. On November 12 Johnson sent a letter to the Pentagon, signed by thirty other media companies, which cited their concern at "a growing number of incidents in Iraq in which journalists are harassed by U.S. troops in the course of covering the news."

"We consider it to be a pattern that is a problem," Johnson says. "There are no circumstances under which it is acceptable for an American soldier to destroy camera disks or take videotapes from journalists at gunpoint. The Pentagon knows that. We went through the whole war with virtually no incidents. All they have to do is send guidance to the field that this not acceptable behavior."

"We are looking into these allegations, and we are aware of them," a Defense Department spokesman, who asked that his name not be used, told *The Nation*. "And we are doing everything we can to insure that commanders are aware of the proper way to treat the media." But many commanders evidently haven't gotten the word. Media organizations report increasing acts of harassment and intimidation of their reporters. Prompted by such reports from journalists in the field, the Military Reporters and Editors (www.militaryreports.org) has formed an ad hoc committee to look into the matter, and the Committee to Protect Journalists has hired a stringer based in Iraq to investigate alleged incidents.

"This is without a doubt the nastiest, scariest conflict that we've seen in half a century," says Lucy Dalglish, the executive director of the Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press. "It's just very, very dangerous over there. And when the soldiers get very nervous, and one can hardly blame them, they tend to shoot at anything they perceive as shooting at them," including journalists.

Laura Rozen is a journalist who covers national security issues from Washington (lkrozen@yahoo.com).

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Dalglish says that while the military was able to exert tight control over press coverage during the war, "once we moved into a situation where it's an occupation force, it's very difficult for the military to control what the media is seeing. And they can make it difficult for you. And they tend to get away with what they can get away with."

Journalists covering the home front complain that their job is becoming more politicized and is being made more difficult by Pentagon red tape. UPI investigative reporter Mark Benjamin wrote a series of reports on the plight of sick soldiers and reservists—including some 8,500 American soldiers evacuated from Iraq for noncombat medical reasons, and the grim living conditions of sick reservists waiting for medical care at Ft. Stewart, Georgia. His stories spurred several congressmen and senators to send staff to the base and call for improved conditions. They may also have made Benjamin the target of Pentagon stonewalling of his subsequent information requests.

"I don't have any evidence the Pentagon is purposely making it difficult for me to find information on the plight of the American soldier," Benjamin told me, saying he's been waiting more than three months for one Freedom of Information Act request to the Pentagon having to do with troop casualties. "But I think most reporters would agree that I am facing extreme difficulty getting information at the same time that I am writing stories the Pentagon finds controversial."

Journalists are disturbed by what they see as very deliberate decisions made by the White House and the Pentagon to restrict the media's ability to cover the most politically sensitive aspect of the war at home—the repatriation of the bodies of troops killed in action in Iraq. "There are policy decisions being made such as restrictions on photography at Dover Air Force Base, restrictions on coverage at Arlington National Cemetery, as far as what reporters are being allowed to cover and the ground rules for coverage," says Jim Crawley, military reporter for the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. "These restrictions back home are not being made in the heat of battle. They are conscious decisions being made by people who have time to deliberate. And there is a potential that there is a political motivation for those restrictions." For their part, Pentagon officials say such policies are designed not to cover up casualties but to respect the privacy of fallen soldiers' families.

"All we ask for is fair play," says Sig Christenson, military reporter for the *San Antonio Express-News*, currently on assignment in Iraq. "It's a pretty tough place to work, and what we reporters are doing is in the great tradition of American democracy: to tell people back home what is taking place, the good and the bad. At the end of the day, Americans should be thankful." ■

EXCHANGE
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

Whatever Clark's virtues or shortcomings, he and his campaign deserved serious treatment by one of *The Nation*'s established writers. A metaphor for this dubious piece is Taibbi's claim that his reporting follows "the old adage: Don't run down the hill and screw one of the cows, walk down and screw them all." I'm sorry, but that's an "adage" I have never encountered.

WILLIAM G. NICHOLSON

San Antonio, Tex.

■ Matt Taibbi is undoubtedly correct about Clark's "true colors." But considering the true colors of the Bush regime, if Clark is the only Democrat left standing in November 2004, he'll certainly get my vote. In fact, if Genghis Khan were running, even that mighty Mongolian would be preferable to the present disaster in the White House.

LARRY BOUDREAU

TAIBBI REPLIES

Buffalo, NY

■ As pleasant as it has been to read all these letters, I'm going to respond only to Rubin and Yoken. First things first: It is absolutely untrue that I had a "vendetta" against Wesley Clark entering into this assignment. Yoken and Rubin falsely accuse me of misquoting them (more on that in a moment), and even within the space of their short letter, repeatedly portray my past writings inaccurately. There are several notable factual errors. Among others, they are:

§ In the April 22, 1999, article I co-wrote with Mark Ames, "Meet Mister Massacre," I do not assert that the alleged massacre at Racak did not happen, only that the American version of events there might have been, according to many observers, unreliable. The piece is only parenthetically about the Racak incident. Instead, it was almost solely about how Russians would react to the presence on the verification team of a shadowy American diplomat named William Walker, a former deputy chief of mission in Honduras in the 1980s and a figure in the Iran/*contra* scandal. Wesley Clark was not mentioned in this article at all.

§ The article "101 Reasons Why the Kosovo War Sucks" was written by some six people, and I did not write the section about the Serbs and Somalis being "tall tribes." That was written by my co-editor, Mark Ames.

§ Despite writing tens of thousands of words about the Kosovo war, which I did oppose, I never mentioned Clark. The only time he was ever mentioned in an article with my byline was in a September 14, 2000, article about the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in which I quoted Sunday *Times* reporters Tom Walker and Aidan Laverty as having noted that some KLA leaders had Clark's mobile phone number.

§ As for the *eXile* being "defunct," that is certainly news to Mark Ames, Konstantin Bukarev and the rest of the *eXile* staff, who have published the paper continuously since 1997. I left as editor in 2002, but the paper remains in business.

Now for the "fabricated" quotes: One of the reasons I always bring someone along with me on undercover-type assignments is to insure that I do not misquote people in situations where tape recordings are not possible. To that end, I made sure that none of the quotes from the Clark piece were ones made outside the presence of my partner at the meet-ups, Emily Dahmen. And both of us, frankly, are amazed that Yoken now claims, among other things, that he did not tell us the "drool shirt" story. We agree, and my notes confirm, that Yoken not only told that story with great enthusiasm but elaborated in a manner I did not describe in print. As Emily now points out: "The only thing you left out is how [Yoken] talked about Clark's biceps, and how big they were." The other allegations about inaccuracies were equally baseless.

Contrary to what Yoken and Rubin may think, I did not enter into the Clark assignment with the intent of writing a "hatchet job." In fact, my original idea was to do a largely humorous account of a volunteer experience of escalating absurdity. It was only after my exposure to the candidate that I formed definite impressions of the general, which clashed with the natural humor of that undertaking. I stand by my story.

MATT TAIBBI

GRINCH IN THE WORKS LAST ISSUE?

■ Editorial tightening of Richard DeGrandpre's "Trouble in Prozac Nation" created the impression that two drug studies, by Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline, were one study by Pfizer. A production glitch deleted two lines from page 32 (lower first column) of Daniel Lazare's "Skeletons in the Closet." The corrected version is at www.thenation.com. We regret the errors.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Where Did Our Love Go?

The French aren't feeling warm toward us, but it's not because of 'anti-Americanism.'

STEPHEN SARTARELLI

One notable casualty of the diplomatic tug-of-war between France and the United States over the American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq has been verbal restraint. From the renaming of French fries to "Freedom fries" in the cafeteria of the House of Representatives, to George W. Bush's claim on NBC News that France's antiwar position was "anti-American," to Thomas Friedman's op-ed declaration in the *New York Times* that "France is becoming our enemy," the accusations and exaggerations, especially on the American side, have come fast and furious this past year. So systematic, in fact, has been the anti-French tone that late last spring the French Ambassador to the United States, Jean-David Levitte, raised the specter of a campaign of "denigration and lies" allegedly orchestrated by some American media outlets and their sources in the Bush Administration.

But, opposition to Bush's foreign policy aside, is it really an exaggeration to speak of anti-Americanism in France? Certainly French ambivalence toward American power and influence—from de Gaulle's insistence on military and diplomatic autonomy to present-day state-sponsored protectionism in the film industry—has long been a commonplace of modern political life. And certainly many French intellectuals, such as Jean Baudrillard and Régis Debray, to name only two, have made the critique of American cultural and political dominance a central part of their work. Whatever the case, anti-Americanism has lately become a sensitive issue in France, where it is not uncommon these days to hear someone preface a criticism of US policy or society by uttering a disclaimer along the lines of "I am not anti-American, but..." This sort of self-consciousness predates the ongoing diplomatic debacle and even, in many cases, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, though there is no question that the latter brought the issue to a head as never before. Even the famous front-page declaration of solidarity (indeed, of identity) with Americans—*Nous sommes tous Américains* ("We are all Americans")—made by *Le Monde*'s editor in chief, Jean-Marie Colombani, on the day after the attacks spoke directly to the instinctual French embrace of difference in regard to the United States, asserting a common bond of humanity intended to trump any and all reflexive prejudice. And by echoing the famous cry of the May '68 student rebellion—*Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands* ("We are all German Jews")—it seemed to be appealing, at least in part, to elements on the French left often accused of anti-Americanism and less likely than most to identify with American suffering.

As the rift between the two countries has widened, the debate over anti-Americanism in France has changed, becoming even more clouded than before by the political sympathies of the parties involved. Unlike Bush, however, few have directly accused the Chirac government of anti-Americanism for its opposition to the US-led invasion of Iraq. Such charges have been reserved, rather, for the great antiwar movement and, by extension, for the general population, which in France, as in Western Europe as a whole, was overwhelmingly against military intervention.

In France a rather complex polemic has been waged against the "peace camp" by a number of prominent intellectuals. Foremost among them has been a troika of former leftists: writer Pascal Bruckner, filmmaker Romain Goupil (who still considers himself a leftist) and philosopher André Glucksmann, who first achieved prominence as one of the spiritual leaders of the May '68 rebellion. In one of several co-signed editorials published in *Le Monde* last spring, the three deplored the tactics

Stephen Sartarelli is a poet and translator living in France. His recent works include a collection of poems, The Open Vault *(Spuyten Duyvil), and* Songbook: Selected Poems of Umberto Saba *(Sheep Meadow), winner of the Raiziss/DePalchi Award of the Academy of American Poets.*

L'ENNEMI AMÉRICAIN. Généalogie de l'anti-américanisme français.
By Philippe Roger.
Seuil.
601 pp. 26 Euros.

ANTI-AMERICANISM.
By Jean-François Revel.
Encounter.
176 pp. $25.95.

DOSTOÏEVSKI À MANHATTAN.
By André Glucksmann.
Robert Laffont.
288 pp. 21 Euros.

AFTER THE EMPIRE: The Breakdown of the American Order.
By Emmanuel Todd.
Translated by C. Jon Delogu.
Columbia.
233 pp. $29.95.

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of Chirac's "peace party," saying that it actually "precipitated" war by "playing Asterix vs Uncle Sam." But they saved their bitterest vitriol for "public opinion." One day, they said, someone will tell the real story of "the hysteria, the collective intoxication that has gripped [France] for months...the quasi-Soviet atmosphere that has bound together 90% of the population, in the triumph of a monolithic idea allergic to the slightest contestation"—a description that seems oddly applicable to the US mood in the days leading up to the war.

The positions of Glucksmann and Bruckner are puzzling in light not only of the left-wing politics they espoused before reinventing themselves as anticommunist, pro-West "new philosophers" in the 1980s, but even in light of their current ideas. Bruckner, for example, is an eloquent critic of what he calls "economism," that is, "the glorification, by all camps [left and right], of a discipline claiming to govern all of society, transforming us into hard-working hamsters reduced to the simple roles of producers, consumers, or stockholders." For his part, Glucksmann, an outspoken critic of Russia's brutal "war on terror" in Chechnya, has been a lifelong foe of tyranny in every form and was critical of Marxism even as a young radical in 1968. In *Dostoïevski à Manhattan* (2002), a meditation on the implications of the 9/11 attacks in the broader context of modern history, he identifies the kernel of "nihilism" at the heart of every one of the modern radical impulses—from Communism to Nazism and now to Islamic fundamentalism—for whom "all is permitted" in the attempt to attain one's goals. How and why Glucksmann and Bruckner would exonerate the Bush government—which has made no secret of its intention to use force to reshape a reticent world to fit its vision of free-market "democracy"—of the respective sins of "economism" and "nihilism" are questions they have yet to answer.

Their support for Bush's war is, on the other hand, consistent with a position they embraced at the time of the first Gulf War along with Bernard Kouchner, former health minister of France and co-founder of the Nobel Prize–winning NGO Doctors Without Borders. I am speaking of the *droit d'ingérence*, the "right to intervene" or "interfere," militarily if need be, in the affairs of a nation conducting war crimes against its own citizens. They appealed to this principle at the time of the Balkans wars when, in the face of overwhelming opposition on the European left, they supported NATO intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, and they also did so during the Rwandan genocide, when the UN and the West stood passively by. When it became clear that President Chirac, in keeping with popular opinion in France and Europe, would oppose any American attack on Iraq, they defended the war as a case of humanitarian intervention and denounced the antiwar camp. While expressing some misgivings as to the methods of the Bush government in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Kouchner complained that, unfortunately, "anti-Americanism is submerging everything and making the situation unreadable."

The French still love Miles Davis, Mickey Rourke, Jerry Lewis and Paul Auster. They are less fond of the Texan in the White House.

A similar critique of the peace coalition was expressed in late March, after the start of the Iraq invasion, by sociologist Michel Wieviorka in an op-ed piece in the daily *Libération*. Troubled by what he saw as an alliance of "pacifists, pro-Palestinians, antiglobalists, anti-Americans, French nationalists, anti-European sovereignists, and many others [coming] together in an astonishing front of refusal," Wieviorka characterized the spontaneous expression of antiwar sentiment as "the zero degree of politics." The zero degree of logic, however, seems to have been reached the following day by Robert Redeker, a philosophy teacher on the editorial board of *Les Temps modernes*, the journal founded by Jean-Paul Sartre. The peaceniks, Redeker said in a front-page editorial in *Le Monde*, are "at war against peace." Their rhetoric is "unpeaceful in the aggressive virulence of its pronouncements against the United States." "'War on America!'" says Redeker, "has been the sole rallying cry of every form of pacifism of the last sixty years."

As the debate over anti-Americanism in France obviously predates the current diplomatic crisis over Iraq, there has been ample time for temperatures to rise and ink to spill. Two much-discussed books confront the subject of French anti-Americanism head-on. The first of these, *L'Obsession anti-américaine*, by Jean-François Revel, now published in English as *Anti-Americanism*, is an unbridled polemic against a perceived enemy camp and a follow-up to the author's earlier exploration of the subject in his 1970 best-seller, *Without Marx or Jesus*. Revel, a conservative member of the Académie Française, sees anti-Americanism in his country rather as right-wingers in the United States see a "liberal conspiracy" in the American media. It is ubiquitous, and the charge is above all abstract, rhetorical. Though he writes with verve and not without humor, Revel is anything but a detached observer. "The principal function of anti-Americanism has always been...to discredit liberalism [i.e., free-market capitalism] by discrediting its highest incarnation," he argues, one of several claims suggesting that his gripe has as much to do with France's socialist left as it does with French perceptions of Uncle Sam. And when he speaks of "the hatred that the majority of Muslims living among us feel for the West," he begins to sound like some of the darker voices on the French political scene.

In the end, Revel's own obsessions get the better of his judgment. This is unfortunate, because his spirited discussions actually manage to shed light on some of the positive results of global capitalism. But he simply can't resist spinning out passages like the following:

> Whatever reproaches American environmental policy may (or may not) deserve, it's clear that the crux of the debate is situated elsewhere. The environmentalists' agenda is to set up the United States, which is to say capitalism, as the supreme culprit, indeed the sole culprit, behind worldwide pollution and the supposed warming of the atmosphere. For our Western environmentalists are hardly objective scientists: they are leftists. They are interested in the environment only insofar as they can exploit it as an issue to attack liberal societies.

A more scholarly book on anti-Americanism in France is *L'Ennemi américain*, by Philippe Roger, which traces the history of French hostility toward America from the Age of Enlightenment to the mid-1950s, including a quick wrap-up of the past half-century. Subtitled a "genealogy of French anti-Americanism," it is a vast compendium of quotations from virtually every field of human knowledge and across the political spectrum, all sharing a hostile or critical (and often hypocritical) assessment of one or many aspects of life in America: its natural habitat, its native populations, its European settlers, its evolving social conditions, politics, culture and so on.

L'Ennemi américain makes lively reading, due in no small part to the author's energetic, ironic commentary. Roger—a professor at the Sorbonne, editor in chief of the review *Critique* and a member of the prestigious Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, a government-funded research institute—has assembled a gallery of all the negative commonplaces, stereo-

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types and clichés about the United States: bad climate, savage natives, Indian-killers, slavedrivers, robber barons, capitalist fat cats, unlivable cities, soulless scientists, etc. The caricatures are occasionally drawn by some of France's finest pens, and they get our attention. As this culture of complaint builds and ramifies, we witness the birth and development of an intellectual reflex.

It all began, Roger argues, with the suspicious glance cast westward across the Atlantic in the eighteenth century, around the time of the new nation's founding. This was when Cornelius de Pauw, a Dutch natural philosopher widely read in France, first claimed that "dogs cease to bark" when brought to America—a myth that survived all the way to the 1930s, when the great poet Paul Claudel, during his unhappy tenure as French ambassador to the United States, repeated the fiction, citing Alexander Hamilton as his source! In fact, the "barkless dog" derived from a broader misconception of the New World's natural environment as insalubrious and debilitating. The French naturalist George-Louis Leclerc, the Comte de Buffon (1707–88), was instrumental in spreading this fallacy, which he'd managed to "prove" through a series of erroneous studies comparing New World and Old World species, with the latter always emerging as stronger, larger and just plain better. Farfetched as it may sound, the misconception lasted well into the nineteenth century and was often used to explain what was seen as the erratic behavior of Americans of European origin.

As the nineteenth century marched on, negative French perceptions of the United States also became colored by politics (the Monroe Doctrine, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, etc.), American social realities (slavery, the slaughter of Indians, the proliferation of religious sects) and perhaps above all by a generalized animosity toward Anglo-Saxon civilization, of which North America came to be seen as the supreme extension. Then, as the Industrial Revolution began to spread and bear its bittersweet fruits, the image of America as the vanguard of a new, mechanized human society—the polar opposite of a still-agricultural, "Arcadian" France—combined ingrained Anglophobia and the Gallic disdain of American "uncouthness" to create the durable stereotype of the Yankee: rich, powerful, vulgar and a menace to all the things in life the French hold dear.

During the twentieth century, French hostility to America became even more complicated, according to Roger. As a colonial power, France viewed an ever-expanding United States as a direct threat to its own imperial ambitions, especially given the new dominions won by the United States in the Spanish-American War. The relentless thrust of American progress, the demon of the reactionary French right, came to be perceived as a danger by the internationalist left as well when early labor movements in the United States suffered serious setbacks at the hands of the country's great industrial-financial interests. The picture further darkened in the wake of World War I, when France, frustrated in its desires to have the United States forgive its war debt, began to see itself as yet another victim of Uncle Sam, now redubbed by some "Uncle Shylock." (Although French anti-Americanism has not always been tinged with anti-Semitism, their histories have sometimes overlapped, as Roger makes clear.) And the US liberation of France from Nazi occupation in World War II did little to simplify matters. The presence of US troops on French soil sparked new resentment among nationalists, while the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe stirred fears of a new occupation and rancor among many former resistance fighters with its contingent demands that Communists be excluded from office. Finally, with the 1960s came a re-

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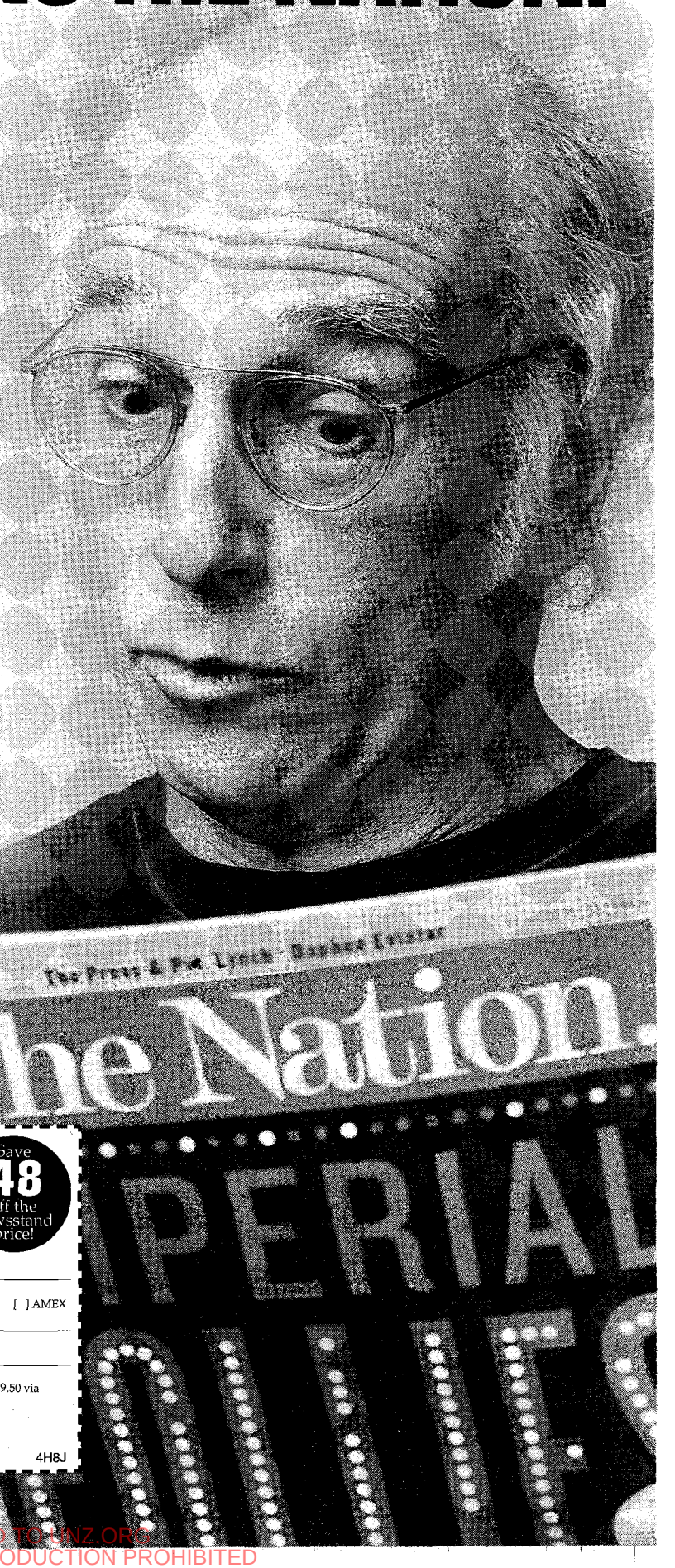

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newed anti-Yankee, anti-imperialist vocabulary, spiced with neo-Luddite yearnings and Situationist anarchism, and so on up to the new millennium.

Throughout this vast historical reconstruction, Roger skillfully documents the sedimentation of an attitude, the weaving of an artificial, self-referential *récit*, or "narrative," of America in French discourse. And the evidence is, at least quantitatively, overwhelming. From Stendhal's categorical assertion that there is "no opera" in America, to Sartre's offhanded dismissal that "America rings hollow," the tendency of many French minds great and small to resort to facile formulas or received ideas when discussing the United States emerges in rather sharp detail.

This said, Roger never actually defines "anti-Americanism." He simply describes it, in the French context, as "an endless war of words waged by France on the United States"; his stated task, in the book, is "to reconstruct its polemical logics." It is, he believes, in the accumulation of details, the establishment of a lexicon of negative reference, that the "anti-American" reflex is born. In so broad a perspective, however, the concept of "anti-American" can become frustratingly subjective. What is "anti" to you might not seem "anti" to me.

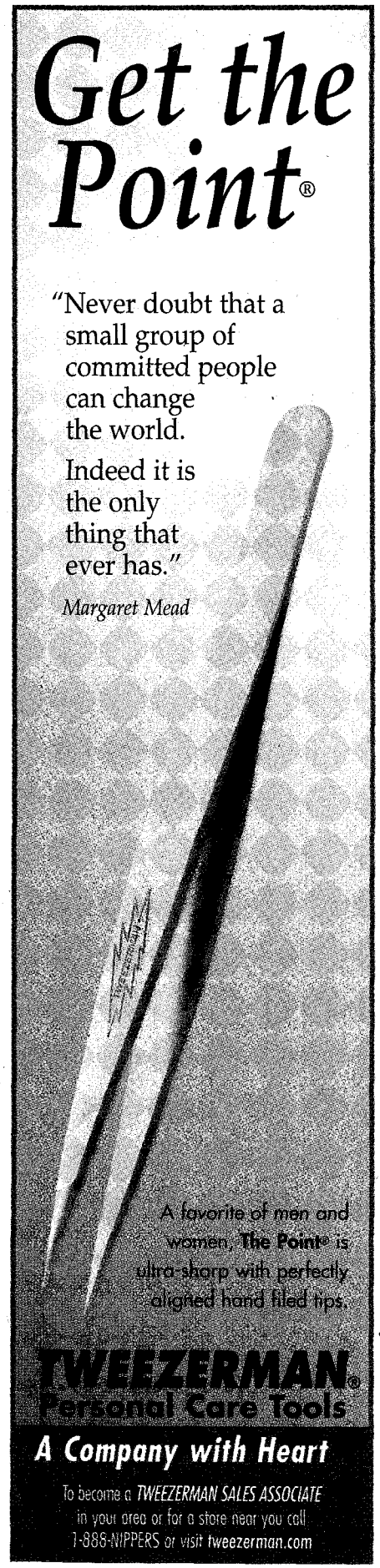
In the early days of the American Republic, for example, a visiting Talleyrand undertakes, we are told, to demystify the image of the idealistic white homesteader. In this secluded wilderness he encounters only drab farmers who "greatly resemble the indigenous savages they have replaced"—a rather tame picture compared with, say, Melville's Indian-hater in *The Confidence-Man* or Cormac McCarthy's band of white mercenary scalpers in the contemporary classic *Blood Meridian*. Does that make these great American writers contributors to the *récit* of anti-Americanism? Or take the case of the Surrealist writer André Breton, whose visit to the United States in 1949 left him with unpleasant memories of anti-black racism. One would think that this experience would make what Roger calls Breton's "anti-Americanism" more understandable. At the very least, Breton's dislike of the States seems a lesser offense than the crimes he cited.

Roger does not try to defend the wrongs committed by the American Republic over the course of its history. But he also refrains from expressing his opinions on them. And since he does cast judgment on his French compatriots for jumping to conclusions, this reticence sometimes has the odd effect of turning the United States into the elephant in the room that we're all supposed to ignore. Moreover, his tendency to discuss specific events only insofar as they provide grist for the mill of the French "anti-Americans" wrenches them from their context, robbing them of any significance they may have held outside his argument.

Finally, Roger's exclusion of the other face of the Franco-American relationship—the commerce of political ideas between the world's two oldest democracies, and especially the French love of American literature, cinema and music—gives his otherwise admirable book a rather one-sided feel. It would have been interesting to see how the periodic disappointment of this love has contributed to French acrimony toward the United States. I think there are traces of this unwritten story in *L'Ennemi américain*, but they are viewed from an exclusively negative angle and ultimately lost in the deluge of details.

How real, then, is anti-Americanism in today's France? Although one sees nothing here like the vicious anti-French campaign recently mounted in the American media, there is no doubt that, as in much of the world, the great sympathy felt for the United States in the wake of September 11 has long since given way to feelings of dismay and outright alarm at the actions and methods of the Bush Administration, and puzzlement at the lack of domestic opposition. Indeed, by the time US troops were approaching Baghdad, *Le Monde*'s Colombani wrote that "vengeance does not make a policy," and that, "seen from Europe," Bush sometimes has "a new-look Dr. Strangelove air about him." *Nous ne sommes pas tous Américains*, apparently. At the same time, French criticism of American policy is often tempered by an anxiety to appear as evenhanded as possible toward the United States, especially in the mainstream coverage of the occupation of Iraq. And the embrace of American popular culture has been unaffected by the tension between the two countries.

If there is anything that might be accurately termed "anti-American" in France today, it's pretty much confined to far-left critics who view the excesses of the Bush Administration as inherent in the American system and not as the radical anomaly they are. By the same token, the pro-interventionists who, like Bush himself, level indiscriminate charges of anti-Americanism at those who oppose those excesses make the similar mistake of presuming the current Administration to be representative of American values. The greater sensitivity to anti-Americanism in France today may, paradoxically, be due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in part to the Bush Administration, whose radicalism has made it more important than ever to distinguish the nation from its policies. This was one of the fundamental points made in another much-discussed book of the past year, *Après l'empire* (translated into English as *After the Empire*), by Emmanuel Todd, a demographer and sociologist whose 1976 book, *The Final Fall*, correctly predicted the breakup of the Soviet sphere. Todd writes:

> Thinking reasonably about America in no way means trying to get rid of it, diminish it, or undertake any other fantasy-filled violence toward it. What the world needs is not that America disappear but that it return to its true self—democratic, liberal, and productive.

It is equally important to distinguish prejudice from sincere dissent. Many of the millions who filled Europe's streets last winter wear Levi's and Nikes, watch American movies, read American authors and probably eat more hamburgers than they would like to admit. They oppose not America but the politics of force, coercion and unregulated capitalism promoted by a small handful of people at the summit of world power. Their massive turnout was as much a message to their own conservative leaders—especially in Italy and Spain—as it was a challenge to the United States. ■

The War of Words

JOHN PALATTELLA

DISMANTLING GLORY: Twentieth-Century Soldier Poetry.
By Lorrie Goldensohn. Columbia. 372 pp. $34.50.

There is a simple ego in a lyric,/ A strange one in war. —*George Oppen*

Many rhetorical bombshells were lobbed by British and American poets during the political turmoil of the 1930s, but few detonated as loudly as this cluster of words: "Today the deliberate increase in the chances of death,/ The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder." These lines lines appear in W.H. Auden's poem "Spain," first published in 1937 as a pamphlet sold to support relief efforts for loyalists in the Spanish Civil War. A year later, George Orwell pounced on Auden. The reference to "necessary murder," Orwell snarled, "could only be written by a person to whom murder is at most a *word*. Personally I would not speak so lightly of murder. It so happens that I have seen the bodies of numbers of murdered men—I don't mean killed in battle, I mean murdered. Therefore, I have some conception of what murder means—the terror, the hatred, the howling relatives, the post-mortems, the blood, the smells. To me, murder is something to be avoided."

Had Orwell been less eager to advertise his own credentials as a man of action, perhaps he would have considered the likelihood that Auden wasn't trying to be callous or amoral. When Orwell read "necessary murder," the adjective "necessary" reminded him of politically motivated killings, but Auden had something else in mind. As he explained late in his life, "Spain" was his attempt to say "what, surely, every decent person thinks if he finds himself unable to adopt the absolute pacifist position. (1) To kill another human being is always murder and should never be called anything else. (2) In a war, the members of two rival groups try to murder their opponents. (3) *If* there is such a thing as a just war, then murder can be necessary for the sake of justice." When Auden used the word "murder" in "Spain," he meant it to invoke men killed in battle (who also happen to bleed). Orwell concluded his harangue against Auden by observing that "so much of left-wing thought is a kind of playing with fire by people who don't even know that fire is hot." There are lines in "Spain" that create the impression that Auden was playing with fire, and Auden himself threw some water on the poem by altering "necessary murder" to "fact of murder" when he revised "Spain" in 1939. Still, when Auden used the phrase "necessary murder," he was emphasizing that no amount of humanitarian rhetoric can cloak the brutality of even a just war. Auden was stressing a moral difficulty of war, which is exactly what Orwell, in a fit of mulishness, claimed he had failed to do.

The arresting ways that such moral dif-

John Palattella has written about poetry for the London Review of Books, *the* Los Angeles Times Book Review *and the* Boston Review.

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ficulties were explored by soldier-poets during the twentieth century are the subject of Lorrie Goldensohn's *Dismantling Glory*. Focusing on lyric poems written by British and American poets who fought in the Great War, the Second World War and the Vietnam War, Goldensohn explains how the poems debunk the notion of honor—that it is noble to die, or murder, for one's country—and in its place generate a stoic, skeptical, antiheroic sense of bravery. For anyone unacquainted with the history of war poetry in Britain and America during the twentieth century, Goldensohn's book is a good introduction, although in scope and analysis it does not equal either of Paul Fussell's landmark books, *The Great War and Modern Memory* and *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*. Goldensohn explains that she wanted to write about war poems of the twentieth century "because I believe that in spite of massive continuities in feeling and approach to war-making, many of these poems nonetheless can be seen as moving with conviction both direct and indirect towards peace witness." Although some of the particulars are murky (what's an indirect conviction?), Goldensohn's thesis is clear: Despite the violence and bloodletting that so often floods back into them, soldier poems are pacifist in spirit. But this thesis is confounded by Goldensohn's own readings of the poems. She offers the poems as medicine for a happier world, but their complexities and contradictions cannot be distilled into a tablespoon-sized dose.

Revulsion to war, of course, isn't unique to twentieth-century poetry. In her provocative essay *The Iliad or the Poem of Force*, Simone Weil treats Homer's epic as a tableau depicting the disasters and torments of battle. Weil argues that in passage after passage, Homer never tires of showing how the use of force reduces people to nameless things. It would not be difficult to elaborate Weil's conceit by partitioning her tableau into panels and portraying in each images from more modern poems and plays. The panel devoted to *The Iliad* could be called Alienation. Another panel might be labeled Pity. It could depict scenes from George Gascoigne's "The Fruites of Warre," a series of poems about the horrors Gascoigne witnessed while soldiering for the English Army in the Netherlands in the 1570s: "I set aside to tell the restless toyle,/The mangled corps, the lamed limbes at last,/The shortned yeares by fret of fevers foyle,/The smoothest skinne with skabbes and skarres disgrast." A third panel could be labeled Heroism: That Old Lie, and could portray the

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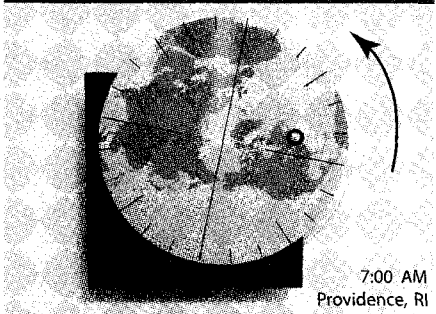

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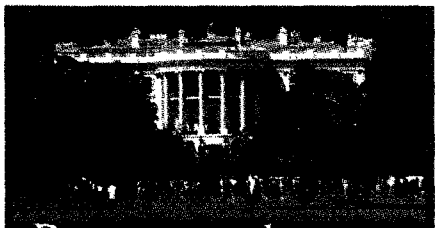

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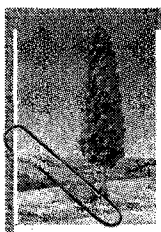

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scene in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* when Achilles, aided by a heavily armed cohort, butchers the unarmed Hector and then commands his soldiers to declare "Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain!"

If this tableau incorporated twentieth-century soldier poetry, its mood would turn elegiac. Although the soldier-poets of the First and Second World Wars were faced with an epic subject, they chose to write lyrics instead of long narrative poems. One reason they favored the lyric's concentrated brevity is historical. Many nineteenth-century British and American poets were overwhelmed by the example of Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Shelley's odes, and their reaction was to retreat to a diminished lyric aesthetic. Because many soldier-poets were nurtured by this post-Romantic tradition, they lacked the sensibility and tool kit for writing epics. But soldier-poets also preferred the lyric for a more immediate reason: It was the best means for responding to how modern warfare industrialized death and cauterized grief. One of the British military's innovations during the Great War was the Field Service Postcard, a form that the survivors of a battle mailed to relatives after having ticked off one of several responses ("I am quite well," "I am being sent down to the base"). Soldiers completed this tidy form after enduring a battle in which thousands of people were killed, with many having been blown into bits that sunk into the muck of no man's land. Faced with bureaucratic euphemisms and wholesale slaughter, soldier-poets used the lyric to reclaim the irreducibly private dimensions of death, loss and grief; the depth of feeling possible through the lyric's first-person perspective was well suited to their elegiac needs.

Besides ushering in a generic shift to lyric, the soldier-poets of World War I created a distinctive ironic perspective on the horrors of modern war, Goldensohn says, and their awareness became the standard for British and American soldier-poets who fought in the century's other wars. "Why are there no poets like Owen and Sassoon who lived with the fighting troops and wrote of their experiences while enduring them?" the British poet Keith Douglas wondered during the Second World War. Siegfried Sassoon and Edmund Blunden often built their poems around ironic contrasts between trench life and English pastoral scenes. Wilfred Owen also relied on irony, but his subject was different. Whether dwelling on a group of soldiers or a single soldier, Owen always displays, in Goldensohn's words, a "brooding care for the dead, the mutilated, and the mutilated dead of war," including the enemy. "What passing bells for these who die as cattle?" he asks in "Anthem for Doomed Youth." "Only the monstrous anger of the guns." Owen's most searing riposte to those guns, "Dulce et Decorum Est," features a haunting description of a gassed soldier's dying convulsions—"If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood/Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs"—and ends with a caustic citation of a Horatian maxim, "Dulce et decorum est/Pro Patria mori" (roughly, "sweet and fitting it is to die for one's country"). From Owen's ironic deflation of patriotic blather like "dulce et decorum est" issues an alternative, heroic sense of compassion.

There are echoes of Owen's sensibility in Randall Jarrell's war poetry. A sergeant in the Army Air Force from 1943 to 1945, Jarrell trained pilots in celestial navigation at air bases in the United States. His poems about pilots, soldiers and prisoners have a broader social perspective than Owen's, insofar as they grapple with the culpability of soldiers for war's violence. But at their core is an Owenesque conceit: the soldier as a victim of a bullet, shell or the sadism of military life. Like Owen, Jarrell dwells on the fact that the soldiers are not men but boys, and that having arrived on the battlefield, they can do nothing but fight. A soldier is less a player than a pawn. Few of Jarrell's war poems offer better portrayals of a soldier's helplessness than "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner": "From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,/And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze./Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,/I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters./When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose."

Whether it's journalism, fiction or poetry, writing about war is routinely prized for "combat gnosticism," which is the notion that the ability to comprehend war requires a special knowledge possessed only by a battle-hardened elite. It was only this past May, not long after American tanks had rolled into Baghdad, that many reviewers were intoxicated by *Jarhead*, Anthony Swofford's memoir about his life as a Marine sniper during Gulf War I. Mark Bowden, the author of *Black Hawk Down*, went so far as to call *Jarhead* one of the "best books ever written about military life." An equally fervent belief in combat gnosticism has also fueled attacks on Swofford's battle-hardened credentials. At Amazon.com, active and retired Marines have turned the consumer review page for *Jarhead* into a target range. One skeptical reader, a Korean War vet, is so repulsed by the book ("pure trash") that after listing his

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many military citations and medals, he challenges Swofford to compare notes on casualties and combat.

Although some soldiers do witness or experience atrocities that many civilians will only know secondhand, combat gnosticism is a creaky standard for evaluating writing about war. I say "some soldiers" because not all enlisted personnel experience battle. There are now around 133,000 American soldiers in Iraq; of that number, around 56,000 are trained for combat, and only half that number, at the most, are on patrol at any one time. At the end of World War II, only 2 million of the 11 million people in the US Army were in combat divisions, and of that 2 million fewer than 700,000 served in infantry units. Flight instructor Jarrell was not among that 700,000, and so according to the standard of combat gnosticism, one must conclude that Jarrell's poems about war are less convincing than those of Owen or Keith Douglas, who fought and died in combat—which is bogus.

Combat gnosticism is also a flawed standard because it conceals the extent to which soldier-poets are shaped by more than their exposure to battlefield calamities. The sensual style and sensibility of Owen's war poetry, for instance, is latent in the sentimental homoerotic lyrics he wrote years before first setting foot in a trench in January 1917. As Fussell notes in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Owen's juvenilia shows that the poet learned from the traditions of Victorian homoerotic poetry how to notice boys; the muck and danger of the trenches heightened Owen's sense of male fellowship and self-sacrifice and cleansed his rhetoric of cliché. During the war Owen continued to write in the mournful tone he had absorbed from reading A.E. Housman and John Addington Symonds before the war, but that tone was quickened by his delicate descriptions of wounded and dead lads. "Red lips are not so red/As the stained stones kissed by the English dead," writes Owen in "Greater Love." "Your slender attitude/Trembles not exquisite like limbs knife-skewed."

Despite such gruesome images, Owen's poems do not easily lend themselves to a pacifist or antiwar politics, or what Goldensohn calls "peace witness." Not only did Owen disparage "washy pacifists" in the same breath that he condemned "whiskied prussianists" but he also sometimes employed the kind of heroic images that chateau generals used to stir up their troops before shipping them off to a certain death. In "Spring Offensive," Owen writes of soldiers who "Leapt to swift unseen bullets or went up/On the hot blast and fury of hell's upsurge." That last image recalls the ancient Greek *ekpyrosis*, which means to be consumed by a ball of fire in a moment of death and rebirth. The Greeks used *ekpyrosis* to describe battlefield heroes.

Jarrell's reaction to the Second World War was as complicated as Owen's was to the First. In his wartime poems and letters, Jarrell lambasted military and civilian institutions for making soldiers into the interchangeable cogs of a bloodthirsty war machine, but he didn't confuse his antimilitarism with pacifism. In 1961, during a reading of "Eighth Air Force," Jarrell had this to say about the bomber pilots who are the poem's subject: "These people were our saviors. I mean if people like this hadn't murdered other people and died, why, we would be under a Nazi government." Jarrell essentially reprises Auden's line in "Spain" about "necessary murder," but without any breathless rhetoric. Like Auden, Jarrell refused to accept that the poison of war freed him from certain responsibilities, even if those responsibilities entailed supporting an antifascist war waged by a ruthless Allied bombing campaign.

In the second half of the twentieth century, according to Goldensohn, war poetry

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Ruy Teixeira

Today, competition between the presidential candidates has reinforced the party's underlying divisions between its populist and centrist wings. But, among ordinary rank and file Democrats the most significant difference in perspective actually stems from the practical differences between issue-oriented activists and professional political campaign workers. They have different goals, but when these two groups meet in a political campaign they find their needs and objectives overlap. **On basic Democratic principles and values, far more unites them than divides them.**

Today Democrats have a profound moral and social obligation to seek unity. Democratic divisions have allowed Republicans to embrace an ideological extremism and "win at any cost" mentality that threatens not only the Democrats as a political party but many basic American values and institutions.

What is urgently needed is a dialogue among Democrats to establish minimum standards of mutual respect and cooperation between the various sectors of the party. Beyond this Democrats need a new approach to political strategy, one based on the hard facts about public opinion and the belief that centrist strategies for winning majorities can be combined with progressive goals and ideals.

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came to embody an "antiwar ideology." This claim is confusing, not only because it's at odds with Jarrell's work but also because it conflates "antimilitaristic" and "antiwar," as if demystifying military values like heroism and opposing the entire political and economic enterprise of warmaking were identical. Owen condemned the patriotism and nationalism of Britain's military aristocracy, but his antimilitarism didn't bleed into pacifism; instead, he redefined heroism as a daring form of compassion for wounded and dead soldiers. In fact, Goldensohn's argument is often shaken by a collision between two elements: on the one hand, the recognition of the complexity of a poet's political opinions about a particular war and, on the other hand, a determination to unite the soldier-poets she discusses under the banner of "an ideologically ungainly but persistent pacifism." The second element often trumps the first, which is why at times Goldensohn seems to think that a war poem, having dismantled heroism and military glory, automatically becomes a monument to shame that induces in a reader feelings of moral inadequacy. It's as if she wants to reveal that the bedrock of all twentieth-century soldier poetry is the polished and engraved black marble of the Vietnam memorial. Goldensohn could have bolstered her examination of antiwar and pacifist politics by widening her focus beyond soldier-poets and discussing the wartime poems of Kenneth Rexroth, Robert Lowell and William Stafford, all of whom were conscientious objectors during World War II. Given her strong views on pacifism, it's odd that Goldensohn doesn't discuss them.

In 1939, when she was writing her essay on *The Iliad*, Simone Weil was a committed pacifist. She was also a very selective reader of Homer's epic. As Christopher Benfey observed recently in the *New York Review of Books*, Weil's essay isolates *The Iliad*'s scenes of combat horror and ignores all that occurs away from the battlefield: the embassies and negotiations, Helen's ambiguous role—that is, the world of politics. Weil plunged into that world in 1941 when she repudiated her pacifism to work for Hitler's destruction. That Weil changed her opinion about the use of force in no way diminishes her definition of force as something that bends every soldier (living or dead) to its will, reducing him or her to a thing. George Oppen proposes a similar definition of force in "Blood From the Stone," a reflection on his combat experiences as an infantryman in the US Army's 103rd Division during World War II: "And war.//More than we felt or saw./There is a simple ego in a lyric,/A strange one in war./To a body anything can happen,/Like a brick./Too obvious to say./But all horror came from it."

Like Owen and Oppen, the best British and American soldier-poets of the twentieth century defied war's inexorable force by managing to represent it without sounding like a Field Service Postcard or a wartime editorial. "But all horror came from it." These poets didn't transcend their circumstances. Some lost limbs, others their minds or lives, but their tongues never stiffened into bricks. ■

The Haunting

RICHARD LINGEMAN

HAWTHORNE: A Life. By Brenda Wineapple. Knopf. 509 pp. $30.

The likeness of Nathaniel Hawthorne hanging in the AmLit museum resembles the shadowy, fading portrait of a distinguished ancestor. Yet, to my mind, *The Scarlet Letter* remains one of the three indispensable American novels of the nineteenth century, along with Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Now, biographer Brenda Wineapple, who tackled Leo and Gertrude Stein and Janet Flanner previously, has given us a scrupulous biography of Hawthorne that does a good deal to restore his portrait's original colors, while guiding readers back to the novels (*The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Blithedale Romance*, *The Marble Faun*) and short stories (for example, "Young Goodman Brown," "Rappaccini's Daughter," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Ethan Brand," "The Birth-mark") that shouldn't be left to gather dust. Wineapple has crafted a smart, revelatory portrait of a complex, contradictory, secretive man, an Adamic figure in American literature.

Hawthorne was one of the great conservatives of the national letters. In Wineapple's picture, the traits are there: skepticism of human motives; strong sense of sin; distrust of utopias and reformers; belief in what today's think-tank conservatives preach as the "law of unintended consequences" (government actions never turn out as planned; for example, the Iraq war); and, most important, obsession with the past.

Indeed, anyone who has read "The Custom-House," Hawthorne's preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, knows well his obsession with the sins of his actual forefathers. The founding Hathorne, as it was then spelled, Nathaniel's great-great-grandfather, William, settled in Salem, Massachusetts, in the 1630s. A landowner, selectman and magistrate of the growing port town, he did the Lord's work as a scourge of heretical Quakers, one of whom, Ann Coleman, he ordered to be whipped around the streets half-naked.

Nathaniel's great-grandfather, Col. John Hathorne, was another pillar of rectitude. As a judge in the 1692 witch trials, he sent scores of alleged Satanists to Gallows Hill. Family legend had it that one victim placed a curse on him. "Let us thank God," Nathaniel Hawthorne once observed, "for having given us such ancestors and let each successive generation thank him, not less fervently, for being one step further from them in the march of ages."

Although they repelled him, Hawthorne's repressive forefathers seem to have been more alive in his psyche than the memory of his own father, also named Nathaniel, a sea captain who died when his son was only 3. Obsessed with the long reach of the past, he became something of an antiquarian as a young man, burrowing into dusty Salem annals and court reports alive with bygone sinners. As Wineapple writes, "The terrible conflict between past and present—the nostalgic pull of one, despite its darkness and doom, and the noisy, liberating tug of the other—is Hawthorne's great subject."

In *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne writes about the ancestor-haunted Pyncheons, also living under a family curse (for cheating a man out of his land): "The wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief." Holgrave, the boarder, a nineteenth-century

Richard Lingeman is the author of biographies of Theodore Dreiser (Wiley) and Sinclair Lewis (Random House). His social history of the American home front, Don't You Know There's a War On? *(NationBooks), has been reissued with a new introduction.*

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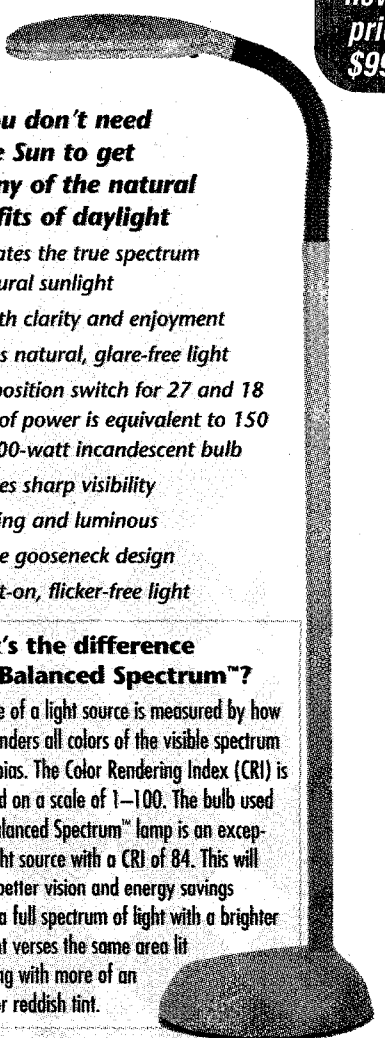
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techie (a daguerreotypist), speaks for the modern world when he cries, "Shall we never, never get rid of this Past?"

Breaking with the oppressive Puritan superego, setting the imagination free and countering rigid dogma with psychological insight and compassion—those were Hawthorne's achievements as an author. In *The Scarlet Letter* he exposes the Puritan theocracy through his greatest creation, Hester Prynne, the first good-bad girl of our literature—"both sinning and sinned against, a woman able to love, to yearn, and to endure the consequences of her offense," Wineapple writes. Prynne toughens under the blows of censure, becoming an independent soul. "The world's law was no law for her mind," Hawthorne writes. "She assumed a freedom of speculation, then common enough on the other side of the Atlantic, but which our forefathers, had they known of it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter." She is in her mind only a visionary radical who wants to free men by freeing women.

But, as Wineapple points out, once Hester becomes a closet freethinker, Hawthorne is compelled to regard her as unwomanly. Although sympathetic to women's lives and aspirations, Hawthorne was ambivalent about equality between the sexes. In real life he was simpatico with the daring bluestocking Margaret Fuller, holding soulful conversations with her in Concord. But after her untimely death in a shipwreck, he delivered a spiteful attack on her, as revenge for her having given his earlier work lukewarm reviews. (He said she lacked the "charm of womanhood" and was something of a fraud, with a "defective and evil nature.")

Hawthorne's road to his crowning masterpiece wasn't an easy one. He was a self-created writer; he had wanted to write since boyhood. After graduating from Bowdoin in 1825, he immured himself in his bedroom at the family home in Salem and scribbled. At that time, the profession of writing hardly existed in America. Hawthorne himself felt there was something unmanly and offensive to his Puritan forebears in authorship. In "The Custom-House" Hawthorne imagines his ancestors peering over his shoulder as he scribbles and snorting: "What is he? A writer of story-books! What kind of business in life, what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation, may that be?"

He began by publishing sketches, light essays and darker tales, but many townsmen still regarded him as a queer idler, confirming his own low opinion of his trade. He was sporadically active in Democratic Party politics, and in the 1840s sympathized with the views of the Young America movement, which plumped for Manifest Destiny, the rights of workingmen, egalitarianism, democracy and authors' rights. He joined the utopian colony at Brook Farm, which promised cooperation and honest toil—but dropped out, disillusioned.

His first book of stories was published in 1837; until then he had been, he said, the most obscure writer in America. He later disdained his early stories: "Instead of passion, there is sentiment, and even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory." Although his sentiment could be treacly and his allegory a substitute for profundity, his work deepened, piercing the veil of appearance to reveal moral and psychological reality. He produced tales like "Ethan Brand," whose title character exhibited the cold aloofness he perceived in himself. Brand searches for the Unforgivable Sin and finds it in his own icy heart—the egotism that has isolated him from the human community.

Despite The Scarlet Letter*'s great success, Hawthorne never fully overcame his belief that writing was an 'unmanly' profession.*

The megalomaniacal magi who are recurrent figures in Hawthorne's fiction—Dr. Rappaccini, Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*—resonate in our own time, where coldly rational science serves inhuman political or financial ends. In Hawthorne's story "The Birth-mark," a perfectionist scientist is driven fatally to tamper with Nature by removing a tiny hand-shaped growth that, he insists, mars his wife's beauty. He creates a potion that removes the spot but ultimately kills her.

Wineapple's multitiered analysis of this story—biographical and critical—typifies her enlightened approach to Hawthorne's work. She highlights the scientist's fatal moral flaw—his failure to see that "the ideal cannot exist in disembodied form"; that is, human beauty cannot exist in the abstract (a point not entirely remote from the feminist critique of the tyranny of unreal standards of female beauty). The story is also a "slap at Emerson and Transcendentalism"—at the view of Nature as divine, benign, knowable. Finally, written just six months after Hawthorne's wedding, it deals with his subconscious masculine uneasiness with feminine intimacy and unleashed sexuality; it is a "fantasy of abortion." The scientist destroys the symbolic child, kills his wife and returns to sterile bachelorhood.

Yet Hawthorne also credited the love of his bride, Sophia Peabody, with rescuing him from isolation and restoring him to flesh-and-blood contact with the world. "Thou art my only reality—all other people are but shadows to me," he repeatedly told her.

"He has a celestial expression," Sophia gushed to her sister Elizabeth, who thought he was calling on her. He was a handsome man, with raven-black hair, depthless gray-green eyes, a faintly quizzical smile. They married, after a long, procrastinatory engagement, in July 1842. She was 32, he was 38. They rented a parsonage in Concord known as the Old Manse and lived in a dreamy bubble of *narcissisme à deux* through the summer and fall. "We are Adam and Eve," exulted the sexually awakened Sophia. She worshiped him, and always would.

The idyll ran aground when the money ran out. They slinked back to Salem, thrown on the kindness of relatives. Hawthorne, the putative provider, withdrew to his old room and tried to write his way out of debt.

He had angled, without success, for a political appointment. Finally, a local Democratic Party boss, pressed by Hawthorne's influential friends, pulled out a plum: appointment as a Custom House inspector. He liked the work, Wineapple says; it was a man's job with a regular salary—unlike writing.

He was fired after two years when the Whigs, under Zachary Taylor, took power in the election of 1848. In a white heat of anger and inspiration—working "as if the devil were in me"—he completed *The Scarlet Letter* and handed the manuscript to the Boston publisher James Fields, who not only admired his genius but knew how to sell his books.

After the success of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, Hawthorne and family moved to the Berkshires, which he grew to loathe; he missed the sea. He met the retired sea-dog Herman Melville, who was living on a farm near Lenox, writing *Moby-Dick*. Melville fell in love with him; in just what way is unclear, Wineapple says. Certainly, he was intellectually drawn to the dark Calvinist streak in Hawthorne's tales like "Young Goodman Brown." They held long talks; Melville's overenthusiastic embrace of Hawthorne's blackness deepened his whale novel.

But Hawthorne was moving away from blackness, letting the sun shine through in the ending of *The House of the Seven*

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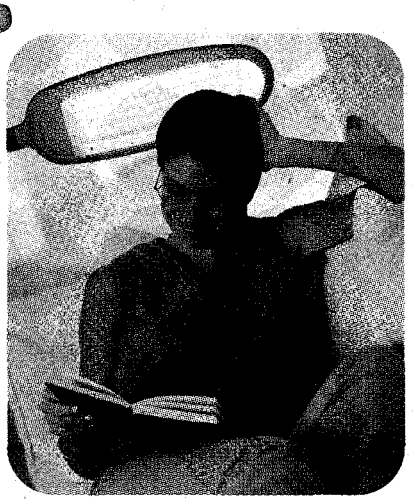

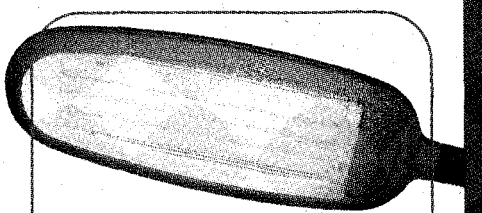

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Gables. He also abandoned his preoccupation with the oppressive past. His next novel, *The Blithedale Romance*, was a *roman à clef* satirizing the Brook Farm utopian colony (the author appears as the detached, self-absorbed poet Miles Coverdale). Not only was he scoring himself, Transcendentalism and bumbling idealists, he was commenting on the hot issue of slavery. His friends recognized, Wineapple writes, that "Blithedale was the abolition movement that Hawthorne adamantly refused to join."

Although he professed to despise slavery, Hawthorne did not abhor it enough to change his belief that black people were inferior and better off with their kindly Southern massas. He said the Almighty would ultimately cause slavery to vanish like a dream. In the meantime, there was nothing to be done: "No great mistake, whether acted or endured, in our moral sphere, is ever really set right." Abolitionists' fire left him cold: "We go all wrong, by too strenuous a resolution to go all right."

By now the literary well was running dry and financial worries intermittently stalked him, requiring another feeding at the federal trough. In November 1852 his Bowdoin classmate and dear friend, Franklin Pierce, an amiable nonentity, was elected President. Hawthorne had no problem with his friend's proslavery pander to Southern Dems. Pierce rewarded the elegant campaign biography Hawthorne wrote for him with an appointment as US consul in Liverpool. Wineapple speculates that Hawthorne was relieved to take a leave from the insecurities of the writer's life. He promised himself he would save $30,000 after four years and take up his pen again.

After seven years abroad, he and Sophia and their three children returned to the States. He cobbled together the static yet surprisingly Modernist novel *The Marble Faun* from his Italian notebooks, but it was his last. He grew increasingly reclusive and gloomy, hating the Civil War, unable to write. He died in 1864, after months of pain and failing health.

Not long before he died, sitting in Concord's new Sleepy Hollow Graveyard and admiring the green grass and flowers, he said, "Yes, we New Englanders begin to enjoy ourselves—when we are dead." ■

FILMS

Crimes and Misdemeanors

STUART KLAWANS

THE FOG OF WAR • HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG • BEST OF 2003

An indispensable work of art, especially at this moment in our history, Errol Morris's new documentary declares its theme before you even step into the theater. *The Fog of War*, says the poster—which, as a title, is not at all the same as *The Crimes of Robert S. McNamara*. Yes, the film's sole interview subject is the former Defense Secretary, perpetrator of America's bloody war in Vietnam; and yet in labeling this movie, Morris has consigned the man to an unemotive subtitle—visible only once you're already tucked into your seat—that promises you eleven lessons from his life. Expository vehicle and unreliable narrator, admonishing lecturer and cautionary figure, McNamara is used complexly here, but always to address what you'd expect in *The Fog of War*: disorientation, confusion, error and killing, considered as features of public policy.

As the study begins, Morris shows you old black-and-white films of sailors at the rail, scanning the horizon with their binoculars. Accompanying these images of tense and fallible watchfulness is an unsettled wash of soundtrack music by Philip Glass. (Morris hired Glass for the job, he says, because "no one else does existential dread as well.") The mood of foreboding breaks only with your initial glimpse of McNamara today: a vigorous and dapper octogenarian, who apparently comes onto the screen in mid-interview. "I remember," he insists to Morris with a broad smile. "I know *exactly* what I wanted to say."

So the first words that Morris lets you hear from McNamara are the boast of a cocksure man. The statement that immediately follows, though, isn't nearly so confident. You're supposed to learn from your mistakes, McNamara says—but there is "no time for learning with nuclear weap-

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ons." Slip once, "and you're going to destroy nations."

Example given: the Cuban missile crisis. In the opening section of *The Fog of War*, Morris recalls the episode by intercutting his McNamara interviews with period footage (always chosen with a fresh eye, never stock), sound recordings from the Oval Office and images of a teletype machine banging out urgent cables. In this telling, the hero of the story is Llewellyn Thompson, an adviser on Soviet affairs who urged Kennedy (in the words of the film's first lesson) to "empathize with your enemy." Negotiate, Thompson said; allow Khrushchev to find some way to save face, and he probably will withdraw. Kennedy negotiated, Khrushchev withdrew, no mistake was made and nations were not destroyed.

But the crucial point, according to McNamara, is that these fortunate decisions were made in the dark. Before choosing to follow Thompson's advice, Kennedy had entertained proposals for a pre-emptive strike at Cuba, thinking that the warheads for the Soviets' missiles had not yet reached the island. In fact, as McNamara learned many years later, 162 nuclear warheads were already in place, and Castro was prepared to use them if attacked. Lesson two: "Rationality will not save us." Or as McNamara says, holding up his left hand in a disquieting OK sign, "We *lucked out*."

The Fog of War turns out to be a chronological account, by and large; so by beginning in this way, out of order, Morris confirms what you might have understood by reading the poster. His subject is the prevalence of ignorance and dumb luck in war, and one man's attempt to beat these forces by proceeding rationally: doing the research, analyzing the data. The picture that Morris invents to sum up this endeavor is a computer animation of numerals tumbling from an airplane's bomb bay. It's a devastating image; but if Morris had preferred to rely on archival footage, I imagine he also could have done something with Chaplin's *Modern Times*. I'm thinking of the shot of a vainglorious and uninformed Charlie roller-skating backward, blindfolded, toward an abyss.

You know when McNamara tumbled, taking about 2 million lives with him. I'm interested enough in the man—in his intelligence, his good intentions, his terrible blindness—to want to know how he will respond when Morris presses him for a personal accounting. I don't believe for a moment, though, that his self-judgment (or rather his evasion of it) coincides with Morris's view of him. For telltale signs of the filmmaker's opinion, you just have to look at the anomalies Morris has worked into the movie.

One of these—which causes another break in the chronological order—concerns McNamara's meetings in Hanoi in 1995 with some of his opposite numbers from the war. It turns out that he was angered, shocked and then illuminated to learn from them—in 1995!—that the Vietnamese had seen the conflict not as a cold war confrontation but as an anticolonial struggle and civil war. Willful misunderstanding, more catastrophic in its outcome than the ignorance of 162 nuclear warheads in Cuba: No admission could be more damning to McNamara, and to the American policy establishment as a whole.

The second anomaly worth mentioning occurs under the heading of Lesson 9: "In order to do good, you may have to engage in evil." From the sound of it, you'd think this section would contain McNamara's justifications for the Vietnam War. Instead, it concentrates on the death of a man named Norman Morrison, who chose self-immolation as a means of protest. The "evil" of the lesson can refer only to Morrison's suicide; the "good" must be the opposition to war that he inspired. What can McNamara be thinking, then, when he says he identified with Morrison? I suppose he means that he agonized over the war to the point that he, too, felt immolated. It's a shameful expression of self-pity, put forth in a section of the film that implicitly finds McNamara's policies utterly lacking in justification.

Today, too, we hear a lot about evil: pure and enduring on the enemy's side, temporary and tactical on ours. We hear about the miraculous efficiency of our armed forces, and about intelligence so reliable that it would overcome all doubts, if only it could be revealed. The world's in the hands of the cocksure—and this bunch, unlike McNamara, doesn't know you have to be lucky.

The eleventh lesson: "You can't change human nature." By the time you come out of the movie theater into George Bush's America, *The Fog of War* has turned this platitude into a devastating truth. I wish all those clearheaded moral warriors could change. I wish they would learn from *The Fog of War*.

Failing that, let the rest of us watch it.

Since we're on the subject of cross-cultural misunderstanding, let me mention the misconceptions that haunt one of the better year-end Oscar contenders, *House of Sand and Fog*. Directed by Vadim Perelman, based on a novel by André Dubus III, it's the story of the disasters that can ensue when old-world inflexibility collides with the cha-

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otic childishness of American lives.

In another of her desperate and tortured roles—she's very good at them, and had better make a comedy soon—Jennifer Connelly stars as a young woman who has not yet recovered from either booze or divorce. As soon as you see the faucet dripping onto her sinkful of dirty dishes, the pile of unopened mail lying by the front door, you know that nothing good will come of her. Sure enough, she's evicted from her little house, which is promptly auctioned to an expatriate colonel from the Shah of Iran's air force (Ben Kingsley). He has been doing menial labor while keeping up a pretense of affluence for his family's sake—there's been a daughter to marry off, a son to put through college, a wife who needs friends of her own class. He has worked hard and acquired the house legally, and now he needs to sell it quickly, at a profit.

Connelly, outraged, tries to fight back; but since she thinks of her troubles as some kind of glue that falls from the sky, the most she can do is thrash about, injuring herself in the process. She doesn't become dangerous to anyone else until she attracts the attention of a deputy sheriff (Ron Eldard), who sees in her a great opportunity to abandon his wife and kids. "I don't deserve you," he says, having moved in, on his own initiative, after one night of sex. "Hmm," she replies, mustering a brief moment's self-knowledge. "Of course you do."

I could fault *House of Sand and Fog* for turning melodramatic; I could complain that Perelman throws in too many atmospheric sunsets over San Francisco Bay and too many endings. (Can't he take pity and relieve these people of their misery?) But, that said, I found more of the mess of human feelings in this movie than in any other year-end, big-ticket release. It won't do, if you want a holiday movie; but if you're looking for something that suits the year's darkest season, then *House of Sand and Fog* is for you.

Considering that *Anger Management* was one of the few watchable movies released in its first six months, 2003 turned out to be a respectable year in film. It offered the pleasurable spectacle of the Wachowski Brothers going down in flames; and it saw the release of two or three dozen good pictures, too. I don't think any masterpieces emerged this year; but here, for what it's worth, is what kept me interested in the movies in 2003.

Ten Best Fiction Films: *Dirty Pretty Things*, the picture that revived the early Warner Bros. tradition of stories ripped from today's headlines, followed by *The Man Without a Past*, *American Splendor*, *Lost in Translation*, *Kill Bill Vol. 1*, *Mystic River*, *Finding Nemo*, *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary*, *Bad Santa* and *Ten*.

Best performances by an actress: the revelatory Uma Thurman in *Kill Bill*, Miranda Richardson (in an astonishing triple turn) in *Spider* and Hope Davis (*American Splendor*).

Best performances by an actor: Chiwetel Ejiofor (*Dirty Pretty Things*), Bill Murray (*Lost in Translation*) and Paul Giamatti (*American Splendor*).

Best supporting actresses: Lucy Liu (*Kill Bill*) and Laura Linney (*Mystic River*), of course. Best supporting actors: Sonny Chiba (*Kill Bill*), Ron Eldard (*House of Sand and Fog*) and Tony Cox (*Bad Santa*).

Best directors: Stephen Frears (*Dirty Pretty Things*), Aki Kaurismäki (*The Man Without a Past*), Gus Van Sant (*Elephant*), Quentin Tarantino (*Kill Bill*), Peter Jackson (*The Return of the King*), Sofia Coppola (*Lost in Translation*).

Best screenplays: *Dirty Pretty Things*, *American Splendor* and *Bad Santa*.

Best cinematography: *Lost in Translation*, *Elephant* and *The Man Without a Past*.

Best documentaries: *Bus 174*, *To Be and to Have*, *Spellbound*, *My Architect* and *The Fog of War*.

Here's to as good a year, and better, in 2004. ■

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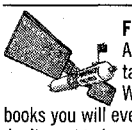

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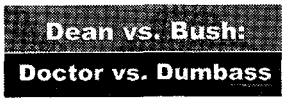

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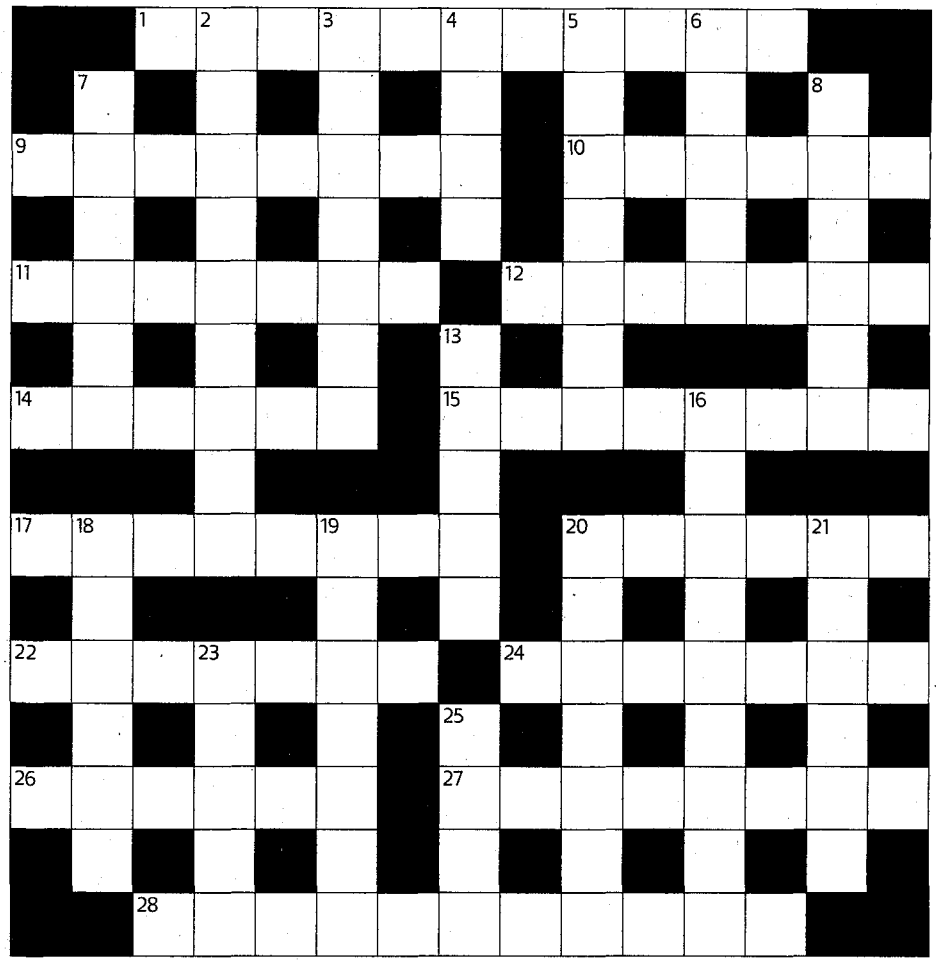
PUZZLE NO. 2923

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 If you're looking for Mrs. Goosey's husband, do this—or at least look this way! (4,1,6)

9 Excellence in *objets d'art* gets nothing so much as a skilled player might provide. (8)

10 See 7 down

11 Almost any kind of belief takes days to hold it, and really turns people off! (7)

12 A carrier for the roof of the apartment? (7)

14 Perhaps marbles hewn in respect for a Turkish title have a setback. (6)

15 A safer way to cross the highway is first to last celebrated by certain people. (8)

17 The early home of Abraham? (3,5)

20 Proving 6 has the capacity to be physically fitted to live. (6)

22 Part of the clothing a soldier brought back has a point—or at least some remnant of it. (7)

24 What you might find the cook doing is what puts some people on edge, because it involves the grill. (7)

26 This is what mischief-makers raise on a hill in 'Frisco, as hangers-on do. (6)

27 Show some respect, which is never wrong when the tea is finally brewed. (8)

28 What it takes to keep some people cool. (6-5)

DOWN

2 Drive in some cars? A real pistol! (9)

3 Little types corral a little horse, recalling such as Vespucci for America. (7)

4, 13 and **25** It implies a fine crossing, but misbehaving children or a messy closet might deserve one. (4,5,4)

5 Possibly spiral types, starting out in two directions with a blue finish. (7)

6 A point can't wrongly make it or make the deed complete. (5)

7 and **10** across From such places, spring may find one in deep water. (6,6)

8 Expressions like "kick the bucket," by which General Amin is onto some strange missing point. (6)

13 See 4 down

16 One can give a touch of color to some walls in your home, but makes the rest paler. (9)

18 The King of Fairyland has a funny-looking robe on. (6)

19 A listening device deserves a sign of contempt, being anathema to some people. (7)

20 Over and away, this shows it's a good place for would-be smoochers. (7)

21 In Paris one is surrounded by the so-called dead, being so moony. (6)

23 Got an unusual answer for a two-wheeled carriage—in the Pacific islands of all places! (5)

25 See 4 down

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2922

	U	N	I	T	E	D		W	E	S	T	A	N	D
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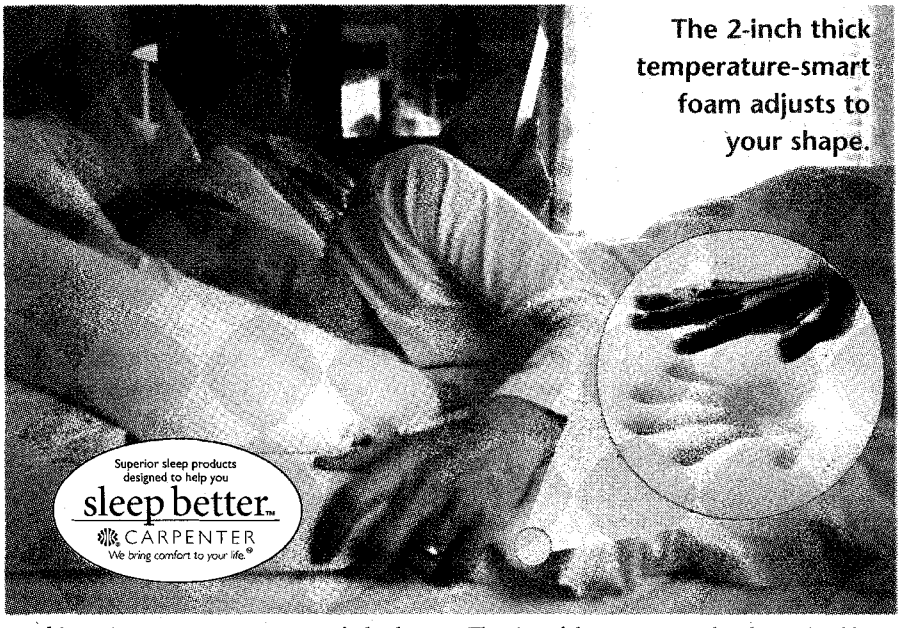
Get in the zone with the mattress topper that molds to your body's contours

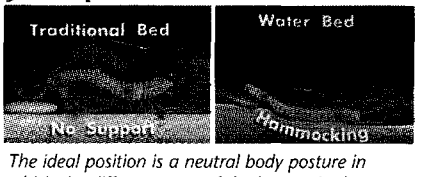
The Memory Foam Ultra mattress topper is cut into a grid pattern combining six different zones for variable support and a better night's sleep.


The 2-inch thick temperature-smart foam adjusts to your shape.
Superior sleep products designed to help you
sleep better.™
CARPENTER
We bring comfort to your life.®

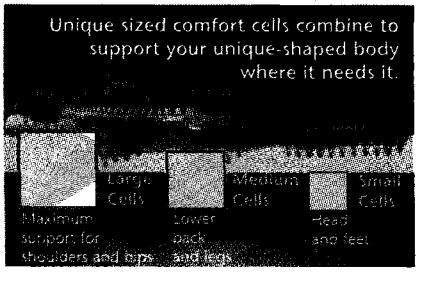
It's 3 a.m. You have exactly two hours until you have to get up for work, and you still can't seem to fall asleep. At this point, the phrase "tossing and turning" begins to take on a whole new meaning for people whose mattresses simply aren't giving proper support anymore. Your mattress may dictate your quality of sleep. Even if you merely suspect that your mattress may be outdated, that's when you need to take action. Some mattresses fail to support your spine properly, which can result in increased pressure on certain parts of your body. Other mattresses, sporting certain degrees of visco-elastic foam, can sometimes cost you well over $1000. Now, one of the world's leading manufacturers of foam products has developed an incredibly affordable mattress topper that can actually change the way you sleep. Introducing the future of a better night's sleep: The Memory Foam Ultra mattress topper.

Wake up to a better morning. The Memory Foam Ultra mattress topper is designed to give you a better sleep surface. Not only does it support each region of your body, but it's also temperature sensitive. With its various-sized "comfort cells," the 2-inch thick Memory Foam Ultra mattress topper combines six zones to support specific body area weight, which promotes a better night's sleep. The largest cells support your lower back and midsection, while the medium-sized cells support the shoulders, lower back and legs. The smallest cells support your head and feet. Combined, these zones provide variable support from head to toe. By using visco-elastic foam, the Memory Foam Ultra mattress topper also molds to your body contours to help prevent tossing and turning during the night. When you lie down on this amazing material, the heat and pressure sensitive foam reacts to your body's weight and temperature, so that it molds to your exact body shape. This means that whether you sleep on your back, stomach or side, your weight is evenly distributed and your spine remains in a neutral position. Other surfaces support your body at the shoulders, hips and legs only. This causes your spine to sag in other areas, which can often result in discomfort, and even back pain. You'll wake up rested, relaxed and ready to take on the day. Anyone who suffers from insomnia and back pain due to mattress discomfort can benefit from this technology.

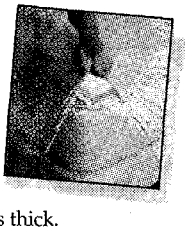
What could be wrong with your present bed?



The ideal position is a neutral body posture in which the different parts of the human body are supported individually and evenly. This is the secret behind Memory Foam Ultra, the mattress topper that turns any bed into the ideal sleep surface.


Unique sized comfort cells combine to support your unique-shaped body where it needs it.
Large Cells
Medium Cells
Small Cells
Maximum support for shoulders and hips
Lower back and legs
Head and feet

FREE heavyweight mattress pad included. Included with the Memory Foam Ultra mattress topper is a fitted mattress pad. It's heavyweight and quilted, and made of 200-count 100% cotton with a 14-inch deep stretchable skirt to fit a mattress up to 21 inches thick. The size of the mattress pad is determined by the size mattress topper you order.



Try it for yourself today! The Memory Foam Ultra mattress topper can change the way you sleep. Promote proper spine positioning, while enjoying relief from insomnia and back pain with this full-body support. It comes with a 5-year manufacturer's limited warranty and TechnoScout's exclusive in-home trial. If you are not completely satisfied, simply return it within 30 days for the full purchase price.

Memory Foam Ultra Mattress Topper:
Item# 2P-2870 **Sizes Twin through California King***
Prices starting as low as $3... 2 payments of ..... $49.95 each + S&H
FREE mattress pad—a $59.95 value!
Please mention promotional code 26151.

For fastest service, call toll-free 24 hours a day

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**For mail-in orders, please call for individual cost of the various sizes along with shipping and handling. To charge it to your credit card, enclose your account number and expiration date.*
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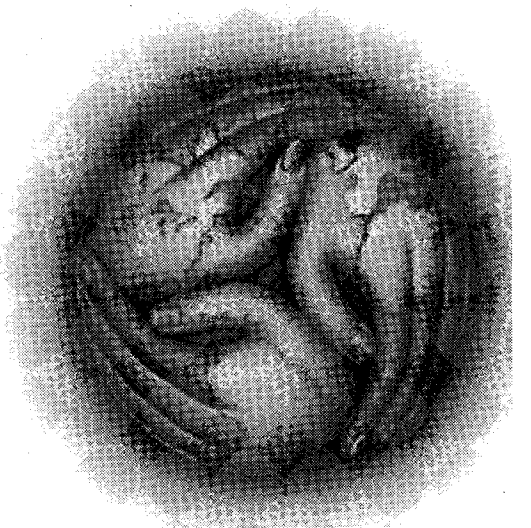
There Is a Way YOU Can Help Bring Peace to Israel/Palestine!



Join our national campaign to support the Geneva Accord

Last month, leading Israelis, led by Yossi Beilin, former Israeli Minister of Justice and Amram Mitzna, the Israeli Labor Party candidate for Prime Minister, signed an accord with Yasser Abed Rabbo, a former minister of the Palestinian Authority acting with the full approval of the Palestinian Authority. This agreement—The Geneva Accord—specifies a territorial solution that brings Israel back to the pre-1967 borders, with minor border modifications, and specifies what those modifications are. It provides funds to compensate Palestinian refugees who will be resettled in the new Palestinian state. It moves the Israeli settlers back into Israel. It specifies how Jerusalem will be shared in ways that give both security and access to the holy sites of each people. It provides for lasting security for both sides. No longer will anyone have grounds to say, "An agreement is not impossible—the two sides are too far apart" or "The Palestinians are unwilling to compromise."

Our goal is to support and promote this agreement in every possible way, and to encourage those in Israel and Palestine who are attempting to convince their own governments to use the Geneva Accord as the basis for a permanent settlement.

We know the best interests of all Israelis and Palestinians—whether Jews, Muslims or Christians—and indeed of the entire planet, will be served when peace is achieved in the Middle East. It is for that reason we are urgently reaching out to our fellow Americans and Canadians and invite you to join us in asking our leaders and opinion-shapers to give their support to the Geneva Accord.

We do not minimize the obstacles that remain as long as both sides continue to take actions that are perceived as provocative and hostile by the other. The cycle of mutual blame, like the cycle of violence, lead nowhere. What is needed is a shift in focus toward positive alternatives, and that is what the Geneva Accord gives us.

You can read the full terms of the Geneva Accord at tikkun.org. It is a precise document spelling out every detail of the peace agreement.

Join the Tikkun Community's International Campaign to Support the Geneva Accord

Our campaign will include: Advertisements supporting the Accord in Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. media; a Teach-In to Congress, April 24-27; outreach and education to elected officials, public opinion shapers and the media; a national Tikkun Campus Network to mobilize students; working with grassroots groups in Israel and Palestine; creating house parties and study groups, developing videos, movies, music, television announcements, and comic books (in Hebrew, Arabic, and English); reaching into synagogues, churches, mosques, and community centers to involve everyone who seeks Middle East Peace.

We need your financial support, your skills, your time and energy to build this campaign for peace. The Tikkun Community is an interfaith organization that seeks a world of peace, ecological sanity, social justice, generosity of spirit, open-heartedness, and gratitude for the daily miracles that surround us. Please read our Core Vision at tikkun.org

Tikkun Community National co-chairs: **Cornel West**, *Dept. of Religion, Princeton University*, **Susannah Heschel**, *Chair, Jewish Studies, Dartmouth University*, and **Rabbi Michael Lerner**, *Editor, Tikkun Magazine.*

Yes! I endorse and support the Geneva Accord. Here is what I can do to help:

- ☐ I'll come to the Teach-In to Congress on the Geneva Accord as a path to Middle East Peace in D.C., April 24-27 and I'll encourage others to come. (It's scheduled to coincide with the March in support of Choice on the 25th, so you can come be with us Saturday, march on Sunday, then stay for the rest of the Teach-In). See info at www.tikkun.org
- ☐ I'll play a leadership role in bringing people together in my community (or at least my friends) to spend an evening discussing the Geneva Accord. *Send me information on how to organize that evening.*
- ☐ I'm a student—send me information about the Tikkun Campus Network's National Student Conference at Brown University in Providence, R.I. March 5–7, and about starting a group on my campus, and/or about interning at Tikkun's office in Berkeley.
- ☐ I'll donate $_____ to help Tikkun spread the word about the Geneva Accord.
- ☐ I'll put my money and time behind my values. I'll join the Tikkun Community and get active with you-online at www.tikkun.org, or by sending you a check for 1/2 of 1% of my annual income. I understand that with membership I get a free subscription to Tikkun magazine and a copy of Michael Lerner's book *Healing Israel/Palestine.*

Please make checks payable to Tikkun. You can also donate or join on-line at tikkun.org with your credit card.
Return this form to Tikkun Community, (ad code: AS-01), 951 Cragmont Ave, Berkeley, CA 94708 with your name and carefully written email address, mail address, city, state, zip and phone numbers. Contact us at community@tikkun.org, (510) 644-1200

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